

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 06820190 8

✓ 1. No subject

ZDC
Cumming

VOICES OF THE DAY.

BY THE

REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL CHURCH, CROWN COURT, COVENT GARDEN,

AUTHOR OF "VOICES OF THE NIGHT," "CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS,"

"SCRIPTURE READINGS," ETC. ETC.

I have seen

A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell,
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intently, and his countenance
Brightened with joy ; for within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with his native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of faith, and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
All these the tidings of invisible things.

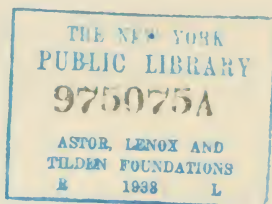
B O S T O N :

PUBLISHED BY JOHN P. JEWETT AND COMPANY.

CLEVELAND, OHIO : H. P. B. JEWETT

1 8 5 8 .

Vh



CAMBRIDGE :

ALLEN AND FARNHAM STEREOTYPERS AND PRINTERS.

P R E F A C E.

THIS volume is intended to be the companion of "The Voices of the Night," a work with which the reader is not improbably acquainted. The last of the series, "Voices of the Dead," when published, will complete my design.

The "Voices of the Night" relate more immediately to the present; the "Voices of the Day," more directly to the future. Both volumes are designed — the one by what it sounds during the night that now is, and the other by what it imports from the day that soon will be — to cheer, and comfort, and sustain the people of God. The Voices of the Night are heard by the ear of faith ringing clear, though very plaintive, from all things around, above and below, ever instructive — ever consolatory, even in their sadness — ever saying or implying, "This is not your rest." These Voices come from the stars of the sky, the winds, and waves, and thunder, and are audible in the very flowers,

"Those matin worshippers, who, bending lowly,
Before the rising sun, God's lidless eye,
Send from their chalices a sweet and holy
Incense up on high :
'Neath cloistered boughs each floral bell that swingeth,
And tolls its perfume on the passing air,
Makes Sabbath in the fields, and ever ringeth
A call to prayer."

But in all these cases their harmony is to be found in the word of God. The Voices of the Day are only echoes, often diverted and broken, yet never entirely spent in their transit from the future into the present. They are but snatches of the heavenly

jubilee,—fragments of glorious harmonies transmitted now and then from the choirs and adoring groups of the age to come. They are intimations of the glory to be revealed, earnest of the future worship, preludes to the eternal Hallelujah.

In all these sweet chimes, that sound as if they came from bell-fries far across the deep waters, one can hear evermore, “Come up hither.” They become clearer every day, as we approach their resonant centre. They ring sweetest in our trials.

The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Let us retire a little from the noises of the world, the din of party conflict, the clamor of infuriate disputants, the clanking of the machinery and wheels of Mammon; and hear, for a little, in meditation and in peace, “THE VOICES OF THE DAY.”

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	Page
THE DAWN OF DAY,	7

CHAPTER II.

ANGEL CHIMES,	25
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

THE FORERUNNER IN GLORY,	43
------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEAVENS AND EARTH ON FIRE,	60
--	----

CHAPTER V.

THE PALINGENESIA ; OR, THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH, .	82
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT BENEDICTION,	104
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESPLENDENT ONES,	123
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BETTER COUNTRY,	141
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX.

THE CITY OF GOD,	Page 159
----------------------------	-------------

CHAPTER X.

PRESENT PRIVILEGES,	177
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

THE HEAVENLY VOICE,	193
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

UNFALTERING CONFIDENCE,	212
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

EUTHANASIA,	230
-----------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLESSED HOPE,	251
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV.

WITH CHRIST IN GLORY,	267
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COMING OF ELIJAH,	277
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER I.

THE DAWN OF DAY.

“ Yes, we have
Answers oft we know not whence,
Echoes from beyond the grave,
Recognized intelligence.

“ Such rebounds our inward ear
Catches sometimes from afar.
Listen, ponder, hold them dear,
For of God, of God they are.”

“ The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” — ROMANS 13 : 12.

AMID much that is painful to the Christian heart, and perplexing to every mind, it is delightful to know that the night to which such perplexities and pains are confined is far spent, and that the day that dissipates them all is close at hand. Scripture and the signs of the times so teach us.

What is meant by the night? and what by the day? and what are the presumptive proofs that the one is far spent, and that the other, as the apostle proclaimed it to be then, and as we may with greater emphasis proclaim it to be now, is close at hand?

The night is justly associated as a symbol, in every language, owing to its characteristic darkness, with the greater or lesser ignorance of the human mind. The dispensation under which we now are is called by the apostle, from this circumstance, with others, the night. There is much around us that

the most enlightened are unable to penetrate. There are obscurities lying on the commonest things that the most gifted minds are incompetent to remove. There are bright truths of which we can now see only the shadow. There are grand sounds of which we can now hear the echoes only. There is a brightening glory beyond the horizon of our present view, occasional sparks of which are all we can now catch; by which, however, we may form some conception of the distant magnificence and the splendor on which the sun never sets. "We see," says the apostle, "as through a glass, darkly." And those things about which Christians quarrel are generally these very things which we cannot see, because of the night now far spent; but which we shall see, and fully comprehend, when the day itself comes.

The night, too, may fairly be regarded as the symbol of the prevalence, more or less, of error. The night that now is is too plainly characterized by the growth and progress of multitudinous heresies, misconceptions and delusions. How many creeds are still popular among mankind, pervaded, every one of them, with the most deadly heresy! How much alloy of error is there in the faith of many a church, true and Christian in the main, notwithstanding! In the great western apostasy there is evidence of night, deep, dark, impenetrable, lying on head and heart, and overshadowing both with baleful delusion. A system is there in which truth is neutralized by error; in which the light is admitted only to be extinguished by darkness, or to be divided and distorted; in which Jesus is recognized in order to be betrayed, as of old, with a kiss; a system where the minister of the Gospel is perverted into the priest, where one sacrament is made a god, and the other an exorcism; in which worship is pantomime, the church a sepulchre, and Christianity a gigantic parody. This apostasy exists, and will exist in the night, and so long as the night shall last, for it will be destroyed only by the

brightness of the Redeemer's coming. The first ray of the rising of that Sun who is now beneath the horizon, but who will then emerge above the horizon, will utterly blast and break up that system which has destroyed the souls that he came to save, and dishonored him that came to save them. It is because that conspiracy, through all its heads, is conscious that the night is far spent, and that its despotism is almost gone, that it is now beating about in every country and capital of Europe, in order to gain a foot-hold, if it should only be for one hour, before the night departs, and the bright light comes, in which its hierarchy and all its dependent systems of darkness can neither live nor prosper.

But the night is not only associated with ignorance and error; it is also identified in Scripture with sorrow, tribulation and affliction. "The night of trial," "the night of weeping," "the night of sorrow," "the night of affliction," are frequent scriptural expressions. And who does not know that, in this dispensation, through not a little but much tribulation, we must enter into the kingdom of God? How often are the loved and the cherished snatched away without notice, through the interposition of a mysterious Hand, accompanied by no indication of the why or the wherefore it was so! How often does a storm descend upon us, that we neither see nor know whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; which we can feel was present by the chasm it has left, whilst it swept away all our industry had accumulated, and left the bare earth with no inscription or solution of the interposition! Not a year ends that has not been to many a night of tribulation. How much trial, how much sorrow, how much conflict, do we feel in keeping right a heart that ever tries to snap its leading-strings within, and to hold at bay a foe ever watchful, and ever going about seeking whom he may destroy! How much tribulation must there be endured by every one who knows what the Saviour hath said of the most sainted, "Satan hath

desired to have thee," — which is the characteristic of the night — "that he may sift thee as wheat"! Yet how consolatory is the holy guarantee, that night shall end in bright day! "I have prayed for thee," — not that thy affliction may cease, — but "that thy faith fail not."

The night is also associated in Scripture with toil and labor. The church is now militant, not glorified. Men object very frequently, as I have heard them say, to controversy for the purity and the safety and the spread of the gospel. Surely, the very law of our condition is controversy. We now constitute the church militant. Who and what is a soldier? A man armed for the defence of what he loves, and for repelling those that would filch him of that which he loves. Even so the church of Christ, as now represented in every passage of Scripture, is striving, laboring, working, fighting. The church is militant, and while the night lasts she must continue so, — each sentinel must be at his post, each soldier in his rank, each sword ready in its sheath, each laborer on the building, — every man feeling that he is here to fight while the night continues, and that only when the coming day dawns shall he reap the promised reward, the crown of glory, the incorruptible inheritance that fadeth not away.

The night, too, is associated in Scripture with death. Now we die. But when the day predicted in that beautiful chapter of the Revelation on which I have already written shall arrive, there shall be no death nor night there. But while the night lasts, — that is, while this dispensation continues, — death will visit every man. A heathen poet could say,

"Æquo pede pulsat,
Pauperum tabernas regumque turres ;"

that is, "Death beats with an equal foot at the huts of peasants and at the palaces of kings." This is an inseparable

characteristic of the night. The strongest heart must cease its beatings; the stoutest arm must be paralyzed; the bravest man, and the most gifted man, must lie down and turn his face to the wall and die. This is the universal fact; this is a standing condition of the night that now is, which will continue until the night be spent, and the day dawn.

But the apostle tells us that this night is far spent. I believe that it is so, and that from Scripture, not from my own fancy. Some of the twilight beams seem to indicate that the Sun of righteousness, if below the horizon, already tips it with his outer rim, and will soon emerge and shed down the splendor of millennial day. But it is when the sun is just below the horizon, — that is, when the day is nearest, — that the clouds seem to struggle most for ascendancy, and that the contest becomes, or seems, the most intense, whether the day or night shall have the victory. Thus we may expect that, just because the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, the conflict will become hotter, the evil for a season intenser, and trials multiplied a thousand-fold. Who can look back to the last five years, and not see that we have scarcely passed a year without a special chastisement or judgment of God? In one year was the failure of the crops, in another year that of our commercial prosperity, in another the pestilence that swept away eighteen thousand of this metropolis alone, and in this year the irruption of a moral pestilence from the Tiber. I use this expression, not to offend those Roman Catholics who, of course, repudiate the epithet, but because a time is come for us to tell them more emphatically than we ever did what the Bible enunciates about their system; and because the judgments denounced on it are soon about to descend, — judgments from which I conjure them to escape as Lot from Sodom, lest they receive its plagues. All these things indicate that the day is at hand. Ancient prophecies are nearly all fulfilled. The Apocalyptic vials are nearly poured out.

The seventh is pouring out, and its effects are felt in every land, and acknowledged by almost every interpreter of prophecy. The seventh trumpet has sounded, and its echoes are reverberating over all the earth. The seals have all been broken, and their mysterious contents are made known. The eve of the last conflict has come. Well-drilled forces are mustering to the battle. Our own country is stirred, at this moment, to its depths, as if there were in its very conscience — in the national conscience — an instinctive premonition of what is speedily coming on the earth, and yet a high moral sensibility which makes me think more highly of this great country than I ever thought in my life. It has a perception, clear and fixed, that the dismantler of the holy, the enslaver of the free, the shutter of God's word, is come amongst us, to make his last, and I know it will not be his successful, stand for the night, in opposition to the breaking day; for darkness, in opposition to light; for slavery, in opposition to freedom; for Antichrist, in opposition to Christ. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Great prophetic epochs, as well as Apocalyptic symbols, are all passing rapidly into fulfilment. The six thousand years of the world to which the Jew attaches so much importance are nearly closed. The year 1864 begins the seventh millenary of the world's history, which the Jew anticipates as the world's grand rest — the earth's holy and happy sabbath. Perhaps some of us may live to see it. Perhaps some of us may never see death; for "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then *we that are alive* at his coming shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." The great volcanic eruption in 1848 was an impressive evidence that the unclean spirits that went out under the sixth vial had been intensely and untiringly working. I have proved elsewhere that in 1847 the sixth vial was poured out, that the unclean spirits had just then begun their work. Let us review the recent terrific

democratic eruption of Europe; let us look at the state of Europe at this moment. Every man is standing with his hand at his sword-hilt, not knowing whether he shall have to draw it, before the morrow dawns, against his brother. Never was German Europe, French Europe, Italian Europe, in a state of greater chaos, of more ominous aspect, than at this period; and never were these words more truly realized, — “Wars and rumors of wars; nation rising up against nation.” Ask statesmen, and they will tell you “their hearts are failing them for fear, for the things that are coming upon the earth.” And what is the recent papal invasion, to which I have alluded, but a surface-sign of the depth and the energy of the unclean spirit that has been working, not only in a section of the Church of England, but in every department of social life, seizing the concession of yesterday as a new out-work for the purpose of demanding another to-day? Nor have we yet done with all the results with which this daring deed is pregnant. In the weekly organ of the Roman Catholic Church it is now declared that the Emperor of Austria and the President of the French have sent to the “Cardinal of Westminster” congratulatory addresses on his elevation to his present position. These are ominous missives in the mind of every man that reads the signs of the times, and studies the aspect of European affairs at the present moment. But let us not be alarmed at this, but rather rejoice that, if what remains be terrible, “the night is far spent,” and the day that settles all conflicts, ends all quarrels, scatters all clouds, and brings within our glorious horizon the unsetting Sun of righteousness, is close — closer than many of us imagine — at hand.

This leads me, next, to notice what are some of the characteristics of the day that is also mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans.

I have described the night, and have tried to show what it

is the symbol of : let us now investigate for a little the nature of the day, and seek to ascertain what it represents.

The day of perfect knowledge is at hand. The clouds that lie upon many a truth will soon be dissipated. That curtain that screens from us the Holy of Holies will ere long be rent from the top to the bottom. Hieroglyphic signs, that are inscrutable to us, because the key of the Son of David that unlocks them has not yet been applied, will be explained and rendered luminous in the splendor in which they were written. The unction of the Spirit will descend from the skirts of the high priest's robe upon all his people, and they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know him, from the least even to the greatest. The effulgence of that risen Sun shall shine into all depths, and ascend to all heights, and cover the wide world with an unending glory. Controversy shall shut its mouth, and contention sheathe its sword : and brethren that now meet only to quarrel shall meet and mingle to praise God together ; and many that had not a taper on earth, nor saw a star in the firmament, in that light shall see all things clearly. This day is at hand. Fact and Scripture say so.

The day of truth is at hand. Error shall flee away like a mist before the morning sun. Hindooism, Mahometanism, the Mishna, the Shaster, the Koran, the Talmud, the Breviary, shall all be annihilated, as earthly exhalations, forever. In that bright light, Popery, with its creeds, its charms, its amulets, its rosaries, its crucifixes, its images, its awful blasphemies, its deceptions, its deadly superstitions, shall be utterly burned up. Its cardinals, priests and monks, shall either be — which God grant ! — snatched from the blazing volcano in which it sinks, or they shall perish in it and with it ; for strong, we are told, is the Lord God that judgeth her.

That day, so near at hand, is the day of joy. There shall be a song of joy at that dawn that will rise in deepening

sounds from the plains to the mountain-tops, and from the mountain-tops to the far and high heavens, raising the strain as it was never raised before — “Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God, and he shall reign for ever and ever.” “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” Now streamlets of joy enter into us ; but then we shall enter into an ocean of joy — joy at the downfall of Babylon ; at the crushing of Satan ; at the extinction of sin ; at the flight of disease, and sorrow, and death, and tears ; joy at the return of Paradise to earth, and the admission of man into Paradise : — and the angels’ song, which began when Christ was born, shall be actualized in fact when Christ shall come, — “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men !” The very universe will become a revelation, a complement to the Bible that now is ; and the very stars shall be the words in which God’s mind will be written ; and man, the priest of nature, shall present her willing and pure offering of thanksgiving and praise ; because nature, she that is about to bring to the birth (*Natura*), has at last brought to the birth, and Christ is come, and the new genesis is complete, and his sceptre is stretched over all.

It will be a day, too, of admiring thanksgiving and gratitude. That beautiful psalm which was sung when the pestilence was removed will be sung when sin and superstition and error are annihilated, with an emphasis with which it was never sung before, — “Bless the Lord, O our souls ! All that is within us be stirred up to bless and magnify his holy name : ” it shall be sung in the past — “He hath pardoned our sins, he hath healed our diseases, he hath redeemed our life from destruction, he hath renewed our age like the eagle’s, he hath crowned us with loving-kindnesses, and with tender mercies.”

It will be a day of lasting rest. When the night that is far spent is completely exhausted, and the day that shall be is

fully come, then there shall be perfect rest. The earth shall have its Sabbath, which it lost by our sin. Man shall have his, in its integrity, and purity, and beauty. God rested on the seventh day from all his work, and hallowed the Sabbath, and blessed it. I believe there is not a beast in the field, nor a fish in the sea, nor a fowl in the air, that has not a right to the Sabbath, and that shall not yet have a Sabbath of rest. There is not a laborer in the work-shop, nor a toiling man in the post-office, nor a clerk in the counting-house, that may not claim the Sabbath. Next to God's word, God's Sabbath is the right and the privilege of man. Popery saps and practically subtracts both; infidelity impugns and denounces both: by God's grace we will part with neither. And when that last Sabbath comes,—the Sabbath of all creation,—the heart, wearied with its tumultuous beatings, shall have rest; the soul, fevered with its anxieties, shall enjoy peace. The sun of that Sabbath will never set, or veil his splendors in a cloud. The flowers that grow in his light will never fade. Our earthly Sabbaths are but faint reflections of the heavenly Sabbath, cast down upon the earth, dimmed by the transit of their rays from so great a height and so distant a world. The fairest landscapes, or combinations of scenery upon earth, are but the outskirts of the paradise of God, fore-earnests and intimations of that which lies beyond them; and the happiest Sabbath-heart, whose every pulse is a Sabbath-bell, hears but a very inadequate echo of the chimes and harmonies of that Sabbath, that rest, where we “rest not day and night,” in which the song is ever new, and yet ever sung.

“O, long-expected day, begin,
Dawn on this world of woe and sin!
Fain would we leave this weary road,
To sleep in death and rest in God.”

It will be, in the next and last place, the day of reünion of all regenerate hearts, long severed and separated on earth.

Those we parted with here, — we thought, in our folly, forever, — and whose images are written on our memories as in bright picture-galleries, ever full of light, we shall find to have been only borrowed for a season, not finally taken away. Those flowers that faded around us, and sickened in the air which we now breathe, we shall then discover not to have been blasted, or trodden under foot, but only transplanted to a better soil and to a balmy air. Those bitter partings which we wept over upon earth we shall see to have been only God's own way of colonizing that distant and, scarcely foreign land, towards which we are journeying, and over which shall cease entirely the night now far spent, and shall shine the day that is now close at hand.

Such is our explanation of the night, as far as its symbolism is concerned; and such is the exposition of the day, as the representative of those bright and better things that are beyond. I may state, as a grand encouragement to us, that the facts recorded in the past, in the pages of prophecy, are in every instance records of the evil one's apparent or momentary victory, but, in reality, of his destruction and eternal doom. If we read the Apocalypse, whatever be our theory of its interpretation, we shall find there the two witnesses slain; but it is only that they may rise again, and stand upon their feet, and testify to the nations. Do we read that the great dragon drew after him the stars, and stood ready to devour the man-child? — It is only that he may be cast down from heaven, and utterly destroyed. Does a great "beast," or "living creature," as it might be rendered, rise from the sea and make war with the saints, while the false prophet does miracles before him? — It is only that he may be cast into the lake of fire, there to be burned forever. Is great Babylon rampant on its throne, drunken with the blood of saints? — It is only that it may be cast down like a great millstone into the depths of the sea. Does Satan go forth to deceive the nations in the

four quarters of the globe?—It is only that fire may come down upon him, and utterly destroy him. And thus the very darkness of the night that now is is illuminated by the twilight splendor of the victories that will be; for the triumphs of the past are not dead facts simply, recorded in a dead history or in an old almanac, but are the auguries and earnestness of that last victory of the true and good, which will be when the night is spent, and the day that is near at hand is completely come. Let us draw encouragement from the past to hope for bright things for the future; when one begins to be depressed by the momentary prevalence of sin, Satan or superstition, let us fall back upon God's word, and we shall see that, however strong, rampant and threatening, may be the possible victory of a present evil, it is only that the evil may be ultimately, utterly, and signally destroyed. How accumulating, too, are the signs that the Gospel is preached as a witness to all nations, as predicted in that passage, "This Gospel shall be preached," not, it is said, for the conversion of all nations, but "as a witness for all nations, and then shall the end come." Many things seem to me to hasten the fulfilment of this prophecy, as if the hour of its approaching magnificent results were already come. What facilities are there now for the discussion of every dogma,—for the play and the inter-play of thought, of argument, of feeling! What opening avenues and pathways for the advancement of the truth, and for the destruction of error, ever in its van! France has penetrated Africa with her victorious legions; and, if she has not introduced real religion, she has at least awakened the elements of discussion, against which Mahometanism cannot long and successfully stand. England, too, for whom great destinies are prepared, has established her colonies over the whole western coast of Africa, and the prospects of penetrating the interior more completely are increasing every day. Civilized dwellings are emerging from

Kaffir huts. Temple spires are sparkling in suns in which they never shone before. Our steamers are on the Nile ; our rails are on the desert ; our paddle-wheels are disturbing the silence of the remotest and the most sequestered seas, and all things, like the Baptist of old, seem to be going forth to prepare the way of the Lord. The Euphrates, the Tigris, the Ganges, the Indus, are becoming the high roads along which our freedom, our faith, our literature, are carried, and make progress every day more rapidly. The minarets of Constantinople are falling. The crescent of Mahometanism is waning. The great river Euphrates, as predicted under the sixth vial, is drying up. In the language of Châteaubriand, "Turkey is perishing for want of Turks." Pagodas are crumbling in India. Its superstition is waning. The Bible is translated into every tongue. The missionary is in every capital ; recently he has penetrated the walls of Peking, and now speaks to the bigoted and hitherto impenetrable Chinese. Is all this preparatory of nothing ?

But it is asked, How do these things prove that the day is at hand, and that the night is far spent ? Partly by analogy, and partly from prophecy. There is running through the whole of the past a parallelism with all that runs through the future. At the birth of Jesus, learning had reached its height. Literature had culminated in its greatest grandeur. Military roads ran from Rome, the capital, to the most distant provinces of the earth. There were but two languages when Christ was born, which were, together, the key to all the population of the civilized and habitable globe. Civilization, literature, science, had attained their greatest spread just when Christ was born. There was no period in the world's history when there was such facility for the messengers of the cross to go out to spread the gospel, or so deep a stillness for the sound "Christ is born" to be heard in every tongue, and in the most distant and sequestered valleys of the earth.

Do we not see in the present state of the world something like the counterpart of this? The literature and empire of our country are all but universal. Two languages are at this moment the keys of intercourse with the whole world. The man that knows French and English may go everywhere, and converse in every capital. English, especially, is becoming more and more the language of the world. It is to me a great and glorious fact, that the language of the two Protestant nations of the earth — England and America — is rapidly becoming the language of the globe; and if these two nations can only feel in their souls the power of their common faith, and in their hearts the pulse of their common blood, they will yet be the grand retreats of freedom and of truth. What is meant by those iron roads that are laid down, stretching from every capital and every village, covering the earth with their wonderful network? And what is meant by the mysterious, wonder-working wire? While these are laid down by man, as he thinks, for his own ends, there is no doubt he is acting under the pressure of God's hand. It is literature, civilization, Baptist-like, crying in the wilderness of the world, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" — "the night is far spent, and the day-star is at hand." That great assemblage of the nations of the world, lately witnessed in our city, is surely not for mere artistic competition. It is designed for something more glorious, in the providence and purpose of God. How remarkable was it that the first Pentecost came when the nations of the earth were met at Jerusalem! How remarkable, also, that, when the Spirit of God was poured out on the day of Pentecost, in the language of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, there were "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and

Arabians," all of whom heard in their own tongue the wonderful works of God! Just when representatives of all the nations of the world were communing in Jerusalem, God struck a blow, the reverberations of which were transmitted by strangers to the remotest capitals of the earth. If another Pentecost has not occurred, an impression may have been made upon the recent great assemblage from all the quarters of the globe that will last while the night lasts. Barbarous princes coming to our land may have seen the noblest civilization growing up from the purest Christianity on the earth. And Romish kings and priests may have witnessed a peace and a social elevation, emanating from an open Bible, an unfettered press, and free discussion, the recollections of which they may have carried home as precedents for their own capitals. And cardinals from Italy may have learned that the truths of Protestantism were too deeply riveted in the hearts of this people to be surrendered to an impudent rescript, or to be laid down except with the warm blood that flows in these hearts, and with the lives that God has given them. And all these foreign princes, presidents, autocrats and kings, as they look upon our Christian congregations, may have felt what was said of old — "So the kings were assembled. They passed by, they saw it, and they trembled. Beautiful for situation — the glory of the whole earth — God is known in our palaces for a refuge." "Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God forever;" and he shall be England's God till the night is spent, and the day of glory and of beauty is come. God's word may have been put in the possession of many a visitor. Some simple testimony for evangelical truth may have been heard by not a few. Many may go home, having seen what a great land an open Bible can create, and how justly we are jealous lest any one's hand should clasp that book, or any one's blind be

interposed between the eye of the humblest and the page that shines and glows with immortality.

There are other lesser evidences that lead one to suppose that the night is far spent, and that the day is at hand. We know that, when the night is about to depart and the day is just about to shine, all the birds of the night and the beasts of the earth make their most desperate efforts to get their last morsel of prey, before the possibility of their preying any longer is utterly taken away. So now we may expect that every unclean bird and every evil creature will make, as I have already indicated, its last and its most desperate effort to secure a place and to hold a little longer its victims. Satan, knowing that he has but a little time, will be busy. Antichrist, aware that he has still less time, will also be busy. The roots of this last system are torn up in its own soil, its branches are trying to lean against our throne, and, parasite-like, to find nutriment there; but it cannot be. Scepticism will try to sap and undermine the foundations of all real religion; and every bird of night will hoot, like the owl, at that rising Sun, thinking vainly to extinguish it, and all that are associated with its splendor. But let us rejoice that the people of God, as the night dies and the day comes, are growing more earnest, more spiritually-minded, more true to their principles. There never was a greater body of real Christians in the world than there is in our country at this moment. While I am not blind to its many apostasies, to its sins, to its awful short-comings, I still believe there never was a larger number of Christians, nor greater efforts made to raise the poor, to teach the ignorant, to instruct the sinful, to reclaim the wanderer and the erring. It has comforted me, too, if I may be pardoned for alluding to it again, to see, when our birthright privileges were invaded, that eloquent protest which still reverberates from city to capital, from tower to tower, its crashes rising to the mountain-tops, and, as

the newspapers have said, reverberating on the shores of Italy, and rolling in the halls of the Vatican, till the old Pope, as we are told, trembles, and fears he has taken most fallible advice, and committed a most grievous blunder, which, in Roman theology, is worse than a grievous sin. Who does not see in this an evidence that real religion is dear to us; that it was sleeping, not dead; that the hearts of our people are still alive? Thus everything, we may expect, will become, as the day approaches, more intense.

The Church of England is getting rid of its Tractarian contamination, and other Christians of their quarrels, and all the people of God are becoming more and more clustered into one group. The distinction between them that are Christ's and them that are not is becoming more apparent. Every distinction of Church and Dissent, Episcopalian and Independent, is falling. Inward reality is becoming more sharply defined. There are appearing only two great centres: Christ, the centre of the faithful, with them that are his; Antichrist, the centre of the apostates, with them that are his. At the last conflict, these two shall be parted forever; and then the light will be revealed, and the day of glory, of blessedness and joy, will shine over all the earth.

My dear reader, we may not be spared till that day; but we know that, if we do not see it while in the flesh now, we shall see the day of death. We must die, if the Lord do not find us alive when he comes. Are you prepared for this? Your present character fixes your everlasting fate. We must all appear at the day of judgment, where God will reward every man according to his works. Life is precarious. There are a thousand avenues out of which life may rush every moment. The puncture of a pin, the turning of a corner, the sting of an insect, a false step, or a flash from the cloud above one's head, emancipates the spirit, and dissolves the sheath in

which, like a sword, it was hid. Are we ready for Christ to come to us, or for us to go to Christ? This is the question of questions. God write it on our hearts, and help us to answer it as we should, for Christ's sake, to whom be glory and praise forever!

CHAPTER II.

ANGEL CHIMES.

“When Christ was born in Bethlehem
’T was night, but seemed the noon of day ;
The stars, whose light
Was pure and bright,
Shone with unwavering ray.
But only one glorious star
Guided the Eastern Magi from afar.

“As shepherds watched their flocks by night,
An angel brighter than the sun’s own light
Appeared in air,
And gently said,
Fear not, be not afraid ;
For, lo ! beneath your eyes,
Earth shall become a smiling paradise.”

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.”—LUKE 2 : 14.

I UNDERSTAND the words of the angel song as they are rendered in our most excellent translation. Many criticisms have been made on their supposed inaccuracy, and one different reading has been proposed, and adopted in the Vulgate version — “Glory to God in the highest, on earth, and peace to men of good-will.” But this seems to me not so natural as the accustomed rendering. At all events, the translation in our own version is that which has been adopted by far the largest number of eminent commentators.

The Christian ambassador must ever act in the spirit of

this first commission. He is not to go forth with his creed in one hand and a thunderbolt in the other; but with the hymn in which the Saviour's birth was sung, and the cross on which the Saviour's sacrifice was made.

The words I have quoted embody these sounds that rung so sweetly from the sky, when a choir of angels proclaimed that Jesus of Nazareth was born into the world. Isaac's birth was preceded by a messenger from God. Samson's was also preannounced. But no such accents as "glory to God in the highest" ever preceded the birth of the most gifted or the most excellent among mankind. Sweeter and softer strains never fell on the ears of humanity. The trumpet-sound of Sinai made Moses quake, and Israel beg that it should not be heard any more; but far different in their effects are the still resonant echoes of the angels of Bethlehem. They cheer the faint, and stir the hopes of the disconsolate. We can say and pray of them, "Evermore sing us this song, O Lord! Sing it to our inmost hearts: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.'"

These words, however, are not to be construed as a prayer, as if they were "Glory *be* to God in the highest, peace *be* on earth, and good-will *be* to men." It is translated justly in the indicative or the declarative mood: "Glory is to God in the highest, peace is on earth, good-will is to men,"—not now, indeed, in full and final development, but in principle, in the bud. The note was then struck, the tune was then started; it will swell in the end into its full predicted harmony; the millennium will be the exact development of this anthem. The earnest is here of a great and certain result, the prelude is begun of a grand and universal song. It is glory to God, peace on earth, good-will to men, limited and repressed at present, but yet unfolding gradually its effects. When the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing under his wings, and shine in vertical splendor, the glory will be

unshaded, the peace unbroken, the expressions of the goodwill universally felt; and the still small voice of Bethlehem will swell into the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunders, saying, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

These angel chimes are the archetypal announcements of the future, the words of a promise now budding into blossom of an unparalleled and imperishable beauty. It is a promise sure as eternity; it is amen in Christ, folded up in him as a flower in the bud,—in him in whom all fulness dwells,—sheltered from the present ungenial air till he restores the clime of Eden to the earth, and pours over regenerated nature everlasting summer.

This holy anthem, as sung by the angel choir, is composed of three consecutive and dependent notes. The present effect of the Gospel, as far as it spreads, and the ultimate effect of the Gospel when it will be universal, is, "glory to God;" secondly, "peace on earth;" and thirdly, the actual experience of "good-will to men."

What is meant by Glory to God? or, rather, What is this glory which is here spoken of? This word means, as I have explained in a previous chapter, "weight," "splendor," "magnificence,"—a burst of supernatural effulgence. When the creature is glorified, it is by adding to him that which he hath not. When Deity is glorified, it is by making known that which Deity hath. The more a creature is seen, the more his infirmities are thrown up; the more Deity is seen, the more numerous and glorious the excellences that are made known. He that knows most of man is most humbled by what he knows. He that knows most of God is most smitten with admiration, with gratitude, with wonder, and with joy. To give glory, therefore, to God, is just to make God known; and whatever scheme, fact or phenomenon.

makes Deity most clearly and intelligibly known to us, most glorifies God. We have an instance of this in the request of Moses. He addressed God in these words, "Show me thy glory." What was God's answer?—"I will make all my goodness pass before thee." And then, what is the historic record? "God passed by, and proclaimed the 'name of the Lord.'" Therefore, God's glory, God's goodness, God's name, are all convertible terms; that is, one and the same thing. Moses' prayer was, "Show me thy glory." God might have answered, "Show thee my glory! Hast thou not seen it in the descending manna? in the riven rock? in that sea that became a promenade for mine own, and a grave for mine enemies? Hast thou not seen it in the pillar of fire by night, and of cloud by day?" But Moses felt, as we shall feel through an eternal heaven, that each manifestation of God's glory only increases our desire for another: the prayer ever will be, "Show me thy glory;" and the answer ever will be, "I will show thee my goodness, and make all my glory pass before thee."

The discovery that will be made every new day, and in every new abode of our endless progression, will ever be some brighter, nobler, more exalted feature in the character of him whose glory is infinite, immeasurable, and incomprehensible. God, it is recorded, then passed by and satisfied Moses. "And the Lord passed by, and proclaimed his name, his glory, his goodness." Now, what was it? What was God's glory? "The Lord God, merciful,"—there is one ray; "gracious,"—there is another ray; "keeping mercy for thousands,"—there is another ray; "abundant in goodness,"—there is another ray; "forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." Put all these rays together, and the bright flame constitutes, in its measure and according to the dispensation, "the glory of God." Now, where did Moses stand when he saw this glory? He stood in a clift of the rock, "and the

glory passed by." Even so it is in Christ that we can see God's glory in its greatest splendor, and understand how its intensest beams can shine in harmony over our present peace and our eternal joy. Thus, to give glory to God is to roll away the mist between him and us, to rend the curtain which shrouds God's countenance from us, and to open the doors of the Holy of Holies, that the hidden Shechinah may break forth upon a benighted world, dazzled by corruptible charms and ignorant of a higher glory. But there is no doubt that much of the glory of God is revealed from every part of the created world. Sin hides and shrouds it very greatly, it is true, and prejudice and passion blind our eyes with an almost impenetrable veil; yet few can fail to see in the heaven above, and in the earth beneath, scattered rays of a celestial presence. When that better age shall come, and when all shall be light, and there "shall be no more night, nor sorrow, nor sighing," we shall see distant orbs, far beyond the range of our present vision, resplendent with the glory of God; we shall hold converse with inhabitants now unrecognized by us, but then discovered to have been brethren and fellow-worshippers with us, and sing with them the new song; we shall see foot-prints of Deity where we detected no trace before; we shall read God's name over a larger space, and within a far wider horizon; and creation, recovered from its ruin, and restored to its true position, shall make known, wherever we look, whether to the sky all shining above, or to the earth all radiant below, innumerable sparkles and beams of the glory of God. At that day, I believe, and in that light, the blind shall see as the seeing see not now, and the deaf shall hear as the hearing hear not now, and the dumb shall speak forth God's praise in a strain such as the eloquent reach not now, and the weakest thing shall express God's might, and the most defective things prove the trophies of God's grace, and all things be as one clear mirror, from which the breath of

sin has been removed, faithful to reflect the image of him who hath called us from darkness into his marvellous light.

But, whatever creation may do, we know that it will come short, to an immeasurable extent, of the perfection of the Gospel as a mirror of the glory of God. Hence, when the earth was made, the morning stars sung together; but when Christ was born, the angels sung, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Creation was the manifestation of his power and his goodness; but redemption is the manifestation of holiness, and truth, and love, and justice, to a degree and to an extent unrevealed and unapproached by any act of Deity in the past, and, as far as we are informed, by anything that ever can be. In Christ is gathered up all the glory of God; in him is all the fulness of Deity. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. The Gospel is glorious, just because it is made up of the beams which fall from his countenance; its glory is borrowed, Christ's is original and underived. The Gospel is Christ unfolded; Christ is the Gospel embodied. Every page of the New Testament shines in his light. Every text is a diamond touched and radiant by a divine ray. Yet we are not to praise the Gospel, but Christ; we are not to worship the Gospel, but the Lord of the Gospel. He is the Shechinah; it is but the tabernacle. His is the glory; it is but the reflection of it. He is the brightness of God, so that I can learn in Jesus fully what God is, and I can see God there as he is nowhere else. He is the perfection of man, the coronal and flower of the stalk of humanity, the archetypal man, the instance of what man shall be. I see in that blessed Lord, not merely what God is to me, but I see what I shall be made by God. He is the perfect representation of God on the one side, and the perfect specimen of humanity on the obverse; the combination of both, — the perfect man,

the ever-blessed God, — the mirror of the glory of the one, the model and standard of the perfection of the other. When I look into Christ's wonderful biography, I see how completely every attribute of God portrays itself in its utmost perfection in him. I have said that each attribute of God is a ray of his glory, and that just in proportion to the clearness with which that ray is cast upon the retina of our minds is the glory that is given him. Hence, that personage or being which reflects God to me most clearly so far gives glory in the highest. Giving glory to God is not a contribution to him, but a contribution to me. It is not giving to him anything he has not, but making known to me that which he has and I see not. Thus, when I study our blessed Lord, I see there the wisdom of God in the conception and execution of the Gospel, triumphing over tremendous difficulties, solving inexplicable problems, punishing sins, acquitting sinners, magnifying the law, yet saving them that broke it. In all this I see Christ, the very wisdom of God, manifest in the flesh. Again, I see justice, holiness and truth, which, out of Christ, were the fuel of that consuming fire to which no man might approach, become, in Christ, transformed into the intermingling and beautiful lights that illuminate my path to glory, and guide me to my Father and my God. In Christ love shines forth so as it never shone before. Its dawn was in Bethlehem, its noon on Calvary, its culmination on the very throne itself. That one text, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish," reveals more of the glory of God than the sky and the earth together. The geologist, the astronomer, the botanist, philosophy, science, literature, all put together, are not to be spoken of in the same breath with that one text as a revelation of the glory of God, — a text so grand, that if the very stars were its syllables, and the very concave of the

sky its page, they would render very inadequately the grandeur of its truth ; so simple that children commit it to memory ; so rich that eternity will not exhaust its fulness. God so loved me, that, as the evidence of that love, he gave his Son to be what we read in the second chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, which describes his birth ; and what we may read in the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, which describes his ageny. What evidence is it that there is something awfully wrong with us, who can hear such a text enunciated without responsive gratitude, and ecstasy, and joy ! I see revealed in Jesus wisdom, holiness, truth, justice, love, in their intensest perfection, — not in distant and unapproachable beams, but meeting together around me, to seal to me the forgiveness of sins, and in doing so to give glory to God. Mercy and truth are met in him. Mercy is there in the highest, justice in the highest, truth in the highest, love in the highest, power in the highest ; and all their scattered rays combine in one focus, — “ Glory to God in the highest.”

When this song shall be sung at the end of this dispensation, then it will be lifted up, not, as at Bethlehem, by the voices of a few, but by the shout of the redeemed out of every kindred, and every tongue, and every nation, and every people, when they shall see God’s attributes, not, as here, dimly, and imperfectly, and through many distorting *media*, but clearly ; there shall be no need of the sun nor of the moon, but the glory of God shall light us. What a spectacle shall the universe present when, just as the sun shining in the firmament renders the moonlight, it may be, not far from him, useless, the glory of God, shining in the world as Christ rises above the horizon, will be so bright that the sun himself shall be as pale to us as the moon is now at mid-day ! for “ the city had no need of the sun, nor of the moon ; for the glory of God and of the Lamb were the light thereof.”

I believe these words, and accept them just as they are written, and rejoice in hoping for their literal fulfilment. Then glory will be given to God in the highest strain, in the highest heavens, by the highest angels, and by the highest number of saints. Jesus has taken possession of the earth *de jure*, and he will take possession of the earth, by and by, *de facto*; that is, he has laid hold of its title-deeds and now claimed its inheritance as his right, and he will take possession of it as a fact, and secure it as his perpetual property. Satan may be called the prince of the air and the god of this world; but it is not his, — he is a usurper. It is not the devil's world; it is not meant to be the devil's monopoly; it is not now and never was designed for the devil's throne. It is too beautiful even in its ruins. It is God's world, — his strayed world, a wicked and a fallen world, but still destined in his purposes to be a reclaimed and replaced world. And Jesus, by every miracle he wrought, gave an earnest of its restoration. When he fed the hungry by a word, he gave the earnest of its future golden harvests. When he stilled the sea, and hushed the winds, and raised the dead, and healed the sick, he presented in all these acts the sure earnest, fragmental though they were, of that coming kingdom on earth, when there shall be no more sickness, nor death, nor barrenness, nor night, nor sorrow, nor tears. Christ touched everything upon the earth, and sealed it, before he left the earth, to be his own; he struck his own likeness and superscription on sea and land; and when he returns he will claim them both as his own. It was the glory of the air that he breathed it. It was the glory of sun, moon and stars, that he looked upon them. It was the glory of the rivers of the earth that he was baptized in one of them. It was the glory of the ocean that he sailed upon its bosom, and that he stilled its wild waves. It was the glory of the mountain that he made it his pulpit, and the glory of

the world that he came into it. And, having touched the world at every point of its circumference, and left there the mark of cross and crown, he will come again, and re-consecrate it all, and reign where he suffered, stretching his sceptre from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. At that day this long-suffering earth will present a glorious aspect. When it shall thus be restored from sin, and sorrow, and suffering, — when that cold avalanche that lies heavy and chill at the heart of shivering nature shall be removed, — “she who is about to bring to the birth,” to give birth to a brighter and a better being, shall lay aside her ashen garments, and put on her bridal robes, and appear wearing a coronal of glory and beauty eye hath not seen. Often have I had occasion to remark that every production in the world seems kept down by a repressive power. Those improvements that man makes on the productions of the world are allowed, in the providence of God, just to show man what bright things the earth holds in her maternal bosom, and may yet give birth to, when the repressing influence of sin, and of the curse by sin, is gone. Who could suppose that the wild hedge-rose and the beautiful moss-rose in our gardens are the same flowers, or that they have come from the same root? We can easily say, after this, Who can tell what roses shall bloom when all sin shall be removed? — what glories the lowliest flowers shall wear when the world shall be restored? what a sunshine shall sleep upon the bosom of the earth when sin shall exhale no clouds, and sorrow shed no tears? The thistle is a stunted flower, a testimony to the descent of the curse. It is a frost-bitten, or, rather, sin-bitten plant, retaining all its pristine capabilities, but unable to develop them yet. But whenever this infected, pestilential air, that sin has made so, is purified and healed by the consecrating word or touch of him who will come to take it and hallow it as his own, then the desert shall

smile, and the wilderness literally blossom as the rose; "instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off;" that is, "glory to God in the highest." Then his glory shall shine eminent on every mountain-top, sparkle from every star, exhale from every fruit and flower a holy aroma, sound in the loud thunder, and murmur in the melodies of the evening breeze. All creation will be turned into one grand oratorio; all created things shall present themselves in its baptized choristers, and the key-note that sounded in the chimes of Bethlehem shall swell into the glorious anthem of ten thousand times ten thousand voices, as of a great multitude of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." We cannot give up the blessed thought, that the glory that is given to God now from every regenerated heart is but an instalment, even in its richest offerings, of that glory that shall be given to God, in its perfection and purity, by the whole company of the redeemed.

"On earth," in the second place, we are told "peace." Much need there is of peace; but not of every and any peace. Not the peace that is made in committee-rooms, nor the peace of mere conventionalism, nor the peace that is spun by diplomatic management, nor such peace as is produced or contemplated by peace societies. It is peace inspired by truth, and sustained by righteousness. The Prince of Peace is the truth. There is real peace only in connection with Christ, and the light and power of his Gospel. All such peace as is produced in spite or in the absence of truth is "Peace, peace, when there is no peace at all." Much need there is of peace. We are thankful, in the course of our pilgrimage, for anything that makes a momentary lull; but we can be finally satisfied with nothing short of the Prince of Peace. It is no wonder

we feel so. What plain on earth has not been a battle-field, from Marathon to Waterloo? What city or village is there that rests not on the slaughtered dead? What passions in the human bosom, what elements in God's creation, what privilege in man, what privations, what misunderstandings in the world, have not been made pretexts for battle, and forged into weapons of war? Wars, rumors of wars, battles, battle-fields, are the staple of history, the annals of nations, the stirring titles of every chapter in the world's sad history. And would to God that war were confined to the world! But even in the church of God, — professedly the organization of peace, the asylum of the persecuted, the retreat of love, — what controversies, disputes, contentions, angry passions! what wrath, what bitterness, what clamor! The very springs of peace have been embittered; the ambassadors of peace have fought each other with olive-branches; the professing children of God have marched against each other under the banners of the Prince of Peace. What an inexplicable creature is man! what a mixture is the visible church! — Not inexplicable altogether; for, alas! both are too explicable in the light of that book which tells us what he is, and whence he is, and what he ought and is predicted to be. Yet peace, though almost a stranger to the earth, and often little less so to the church, was sung by angels, and has been taught and preached by Christ as duty, but predicted as the attainment only of the coming day. He says, "I am not come to send peace on the earth, but a sword." How can we explain this? In one passage we are told that the direct effect of the Gospel is peace. In another passage, "I am not come to send peace on the earth, but a sword." The explanation is alike easy and satisfactory. While this dispensation lasts, there will be nothing like perfect peace; the sword will not rest in its sheath within the sanctuary, nor without it; if only to preserve the church from corruption,

controversy will prevail, and occasional disputes will rage but when he comes in the clouds of heaven, and reduces the world's discord into harmony, and man's heart into holy subjection, then over and in and through all lands there shall reign uninterrupted peace. But we must distinguish: the Gospel is not the cause of contention, though it is freely conceded that it is the occasion of contention. So long as a holy God comes near to an unsanctified and an unregenerate heart there must be controversy; for the natural heart is enmity to God. So long as there is an unconverted man in God's world there cannot be perfect and universal peace. Sin and holiness, evil and good, are everlasting antagonisms. As soon, however, as all men shall be converted, and the sons of God shall all be manifest, and Christ shall be recognized by all as all in all, the priest and prophet and king, there will be perfect peace upon earth; its holy current shall rush through every channel of the world, irresistible and unresisted; its pure waters shall allay every passion, its presence calm every storm, and the peace of God shall keep our hearts and minds continually, and earth repose in the light and joy of its Sabbath-day. That which is now fragmental shall be universal; that which is now interrupted shall be unsuspended. Man's inward peace will not be disturbed when it hears the sound of God's footsteps, nor will his heart quake when it hears the mention of God's name, nor will his spirit feel the least emotion of rebellion against God's will. Outside the heavenly temple, and inside its holy chancel, in priest and Levite, in thought, affection, word, action, there will pulsate the peace that passeth all understanding. Angel tongues may pronounce the word; they cannot unfold with worthy eloquence its inner meaning, for it is a peace that passeth understanding. The divinest things are not said or written. The capacity of expression is proof of weakness. Thought is infinite, words are finite. The best things, the most precious things,—to use

the language of the apostle, — pass all understanding. What a glorious result! — the repose of nature, the harmony of the elements, the happiness of their living; — yet not indifference and apathy, not the peace of death or error, not the peace of the church-yard, but the peace of the church; not mechanical, but moral; not silent, but eloquent, unutterable music — a peace in which holiness shall be set and visibly enshrined, through which truth will be transparent, and out of which shall sound forth whatsoever things are good and holy. Peace is an exotic now, — it will be indigenous then. But in this dispensation, and before the peace of promise breaks on the world universally, let us recollect that there is no enjoyment of peace, or possible establishment of it, without truth. Never can real peace be without truth. There cannot be Christian soberness without divine grace; there cannot be a pure morality without living religion. Many, with the best intention, try to grasp at the fruit, without the labor of cultivating the soil; to produce the blossom upon the dry pole, instead of seeking it upon the engrafted tree. They spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not. The wisdom that is from above is first *pure*, then peaceable. The church is now militant; it is therefore not in peace, or at peace. Do not let us say, Such a man is not a true Christian, because he speaks controversially, and boldly contends for the truth. It is rather the other way. Controversy is the atmosphere, ay, and the daily duty, of this dispensation. It is not agreeable, but it is inevitable. We are the church militant, not the church triumphant; and whoever tries to enjoy peace without the labor of securing and vindicating the truth will get a peace that will deceive, not the peace that passeth understanding. There is no peace without the presence of the Spirit of Christ; there is no peace but that which is associated with the cross. Christ is the truth in the intellect before he is the prince of peace in the heart. The com-

forter is first the spirit of truth. True peace the peace of Christ, is partial now, but shall be one day universal. The lion and the lamb shall lie down together, when the sword shall be beaten into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning-hook. The peace that is now restricted to individual hearts in Christian men shall one day reign in the hearts of the fiercest of the animal creation, and all creatures shall live in peace with each other, because man, the lord and representative of all, has been restored to peace with God.

“Good-will toward men.” Poor man, on hearing of the advent of a God, knowing what he himself is, and what he deserves, must instinctively expect and believe — and consistently expect and believe — that His advent must be that of an avenging judge, a watchful destroyer, to call him to account for his sins, and to vindicate His violated law, and His insulted sovereignty. So beset is man’s heart with this fear, that God constantly argues against it in the Scriptures. What is the reiterated expression of the Gospel? “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” Our natural impression is, that God has come into the world to condemn; but the teaching of the Spirit is, that “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” It would be easy to convince any one that the Bible is a ministration of wrath. It needs God’s grace to convince us that it is a ministration of love. The blessed Gospel is the evidence of God’s good-will to us, or, to use an expression more common in the Bible, of God’s love. The evidence of his love is the gift of Christ. The measure of his love is Christ. Christ Jesus is not the creation of a love in God that was not, but it is the conveyance of a love to man that man had not. God loved us, therefore he gave Christ; not, Christ came, and therefore God loves us. In other words, the very first aspect of the Gospel is a manifestation of intense, sovereign, triumphant

love, in order that its response in our hearts may be returning love to God. True preaching of the Gospel is not that which describes the torments of the damned, or the terrors of the judgment-day, but that which exhibits the height and depth and length and breadth of God's love in Christ Jesus. If men will not be impressed by the exhibition of a love that sent the eternal Son as its expression to the cradle of Bethlehem and to the cross at Calvary, they will never be converted by any exhibition of the terrors of the lost, or by the unveiling of all the awful pageantry of a judgment-day. God's great plan for making his people what they should be is that of leading them responsively to love him, by showing them how deeply, how dearly, how infinitely, he loved them. Hence, that man who can resist the manifestation of such love will resist all besides. God tried the plan of wrath, not for his sake, but for ours; and he said, "Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things." He said it on Mount Sinai. He unfolded the dread anathema in the red lightning, and enunciated it in the loud thunder. And what did man do? He cursed Him to his face, and ran yet further from Him. God tried the plan of benediction. He stood upon Mount Gerizim, and pronounced ten thousand benedictions on him who would love; and man hated Him the more. At last, God tried the plan of manifested love. He speaks now from Bethlehem, he speaks from Calvary, a victim on the cross, where he was nailed by us and for us, and he asks, in touching accents, "Lovest thou me?" and ten thousand hearts are responding, each successively in every land, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." "We love him because he first loved us." The secret of the world's conversion is in these precious words; the means of its regeneration by the Spirit is in these words, — it needs the Spirit of God to apply them, but it is these words he does apply, and that he will apply: these are words of

power, and wherever they are borne this promise is realized, — “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” When at length these angel chimes shall be sung over all the universe, everywhere, and by all, then “Herein is love, not that we loved him,” will be heard as the continuous undertone, giving beauty and unity to all. One word is felt by us, as our experience proves, more deeply than another: a sentiment uttered at one crisis makes a deeper impression than the same uttered at another. At that day, therefore, when we shall take a retrospect of all the victories that love has achieved, and call to recollection the poor, cold response that we gave, with what amazement, if not with penitential sorrow, shall we read such words as these, “Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us”! Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, and that he might present it to himself a glorious church, without spot, or blemish, or any such thing. But it is more delightful to believe that all past reminiscences shall be merged in present ecstasy and joy. This divine strain, now sung by stammering lips, and felt by cold hearts, broken by the din and disputes of this world, shall, when the earth is covered with the glory of God, be sung as by the voice of a great multitude, and the voice of many waters, and the voice of many thunders, — “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.”

While the strain is “glory to God in the highest,” it is “on *earth* peace;” not on Jerusalem, or Judæa only, but on the earth. It is “good-will,” not to the lost spirits, the angels that fell, but it is “good-will to men.” One great mystery that the future may unfold, but which the present does not explain, is, why God so loved men that he gave his Son to die for them, while he abandoned the fallen angels, and left them reserved for chains unto the last day.

This is, perhaps, a curious rather than a profitable inquiry.

It is enough for us to know this revelation of the glory of God, this descent of peace to earth, is for us. It may be seized as our song to-day — it is ever new; it may be sung by us to-day with as distinct and appropriate an emphasis as when it was sung by the angels over Bethlehem. It never parts with its interest. The love of God in Christ is as fresh for us to-day as it was when it gave Christ to be born a babe in Bethlehem. The offer of mercy that is made to each and to all is made now as truly, as earnestly, as it was made to the thief upon the cross, to Mary Magdalene, to Peter, to Paul, to the chiefest of sinners. It anticipates our acceptance. The poor prodigal may be feeding upon husks, herding swine, serving a strange master in a strange land; but his father meanwhile is preparing for him the fatted calf, the ring, the robe, the shoes, and earnestly wishing him to come back to his home, and to his own bosom. The poor stray sheep may be in the wood, hunted by the wolf, falling over the precipice; but the shepherd is on his way, and is looking for it, and will find it; and he will place it in the fold, and will rejoice that the lost is found, and that the dead again is alive. Nothing is to be done by us but to accept what God has provided for us. Salvation is nothing more nor less than accepting God's love in and through Christ Jesus. It is not something that we have to wait for, or to do, or to buy, or to suffer. It is no atonement that God needs still to make, no sacrifice that he must yet prepare; it is God's love now accessible to me. The question truly is not, Is that love for me? the real question is, How is it possible that it is not for me? God so loved us that he gave, as the expression of it, his only-begotten Son. Let us not be puzzled about difficulties that God does not state; but simply and sincerely put confidence in his own testimony, and lay the stress of our hopes upon his dear Son, and cherish the certainty of heaven here for no other reason than this — that God's love in Christ can and does now reach us.

CHAPTER III.

THE FORERUNNER IN GLORY.

“When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.”

“Received up into glory.”—1 TIMOTHY 3 : 16.

“WHEN he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now, that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists.” We read also in the sixteenth chapter of Mark, at the nineteenth verse, “He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God;” in Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter and the fifty-first verse, “He was parted from them and carried up into heaven;” in the First Epistle of Peter, the fourth chapter and the twenty-second verse, “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God.”

The questions that remain for us to solve are, What is the nature of this glory into which Christ is entered? What is the interest that we have in the fact that Christ was received up into glory? and what are the voices of truth, and joy, and hope, personally and practically instructive, which to faith are naturally audible in it.

Christ on earth and Christ in glory are truly remarkable

contrasts. His reception into earth and his reception into glory differed wholly from each other, and were the one the splendid antithesis of the other. He was born in a stable, cradled in a manger; and in the agony of the desolation of which he was the victim, not for himself, but for us, he was constrained to own, "The foxes of the earth have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." What a mysterious utterance! what a fact! what humiliation! He that made the world was refused a home in it; he that came to redeem the world was rejected and despised by the people he came to save: not by the Jews, eighteen hundred years ago, but by you, reader, and me,—by our common humanity. He was despised, rejected and crucified, by us. But if this was his reception into earth, how different was his reception into glory! He rises from the deepest depth of his descent, the cloud becomes the splendid vehicle of his progress, angels appear at the gates of heaven to welcome the celestial Conqueror, and, in the chariot of the shining cloud, he was "received up into glory." Thus Christianity spreads,—in Christ's ascension we see the type of its progress. That rivulet that broke forth a little and a silvery stream, sometimes hidden, sometimes dim, and occasionally apparently altogether lost, at length breaks forth from its hidden channel, spreads its waters over many an acre, rolls and broadens into a majestic stream, bearing the navies of the earth upon its bosom, with the monarchs of great nations at their helms. That precious gem of great price, buried in the earth, is at last detached from the matrix that concealed it,—is set in the diadem of the Most High, and shines the most radiant and most glorious thing in the universe of God. Christ is received on earth with a storm of disapprobation, and covered with a cloud of shame; he is received into glory amid the anthems of angels, and seated on the right hand of God.

It may be asked, How did Paul know the fact that Christ was received into glory? He states it, first, as an inspired penman. Let us never forget that a statement in God's word is any day equal, as a matter of certainty, to a demonstrated problem or a theorem in mathematics. Nothing can be more certain than the conclusion of a demonstration of a mathematical problem or theorem in Euclid. Equally certain and conclusive is the simple announcement, "Thus saith the Lord." When we take a text from the Bible, we are not to proceed to show it is true; this would be an insult to the authority of God that inspired it. What we may do is to set it in all its lights, that it may be seen by one at one angle, and by another at another angle; by one in one light, and another in another light; that all its splendors may be evolved and made visible to every eye, and all its beauty refracted, and reflected, and appreciated everywhere. The apostle says, he was received into glory. That is enough for a Christian. But the apostle, perhaps, could speak to it from experimental knowledge. He was in the third heaven himself. He saw a glory which man's unpurged eye cannot gaze upon; and he beheld scenes, and sights, and wonders, and mysteries, which man's tongue, even when inspiration is added to its eloquence, cannot enunciate. Among other sights, too, that he saw, even upon earth, was Jesus himself, radiant with that glory into which he has entered, the effulgence of which struck him dumb on his journey to Damascus, while a voice coming out of the "excellent glory" cried, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" But, if Paul did not see Christ ascend into this glory, but only after that ascension, other apostles actually witnessed Christ received into glory. Thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And, while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two

men stood by them in white apparel ; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come (what a promise is that !) in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven ;" that is, some generation shall be living upon the earth that will see Christ come to earth in the same shining cloud that in the sight of the apostles carried him from the earth. His own promise is, " I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also." We have also another description of this glory into which Christ was received, by Peter : " For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For, he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." We have thus the testimony of eye-witnesses that Christ is received into glory. It is most important for us to know that there is not a fact in the biography of Jesus connected with our peace, or happiness, or safety, that has not eye-witnesses to attest it. Eye-witnesses beheld the manger-cradle in which he lay an infant ; eye-witnesses beheld him preaching on the banks of the Jordan, saw him crucified on Calvary, carried in a cloud into glory ; and testified that which they had seen and heard.

There is something like a contrast between the translation or the ascension of Elijah and the ascension of Jesus. Nothing is said of the translation of Enoch, except that he " walked with God : and he was not ; for God took him." But we have a very sublime account of the translation of Elijah. Elijah, the stern prophet in a stern dispensation, contrasted in his ascension, as was meet, with Jesus, the

meek and the lowly preacher of glad tidings unto all. In the case of Elijah, the eagle's eyrie was his home, the storm and the tempest were his elements, the bright lightning illuminated his pathway; and when he stood upon Mount Carmel, and confronted the priests of Baal face to face, nothing can be more impressive or awfully grand than this spectacle of that stern controversialist. This man of storm and of tempest, we are told, was borne away to heaven in a whirlwind and chariot of fire, — a meet close of such a life. But Jesus, when he left the earth, ascended with the quiet majesty with which he came to it. "A cloud received him out of sight; and we," says the apostle, "were eye-witnesses of his glory."

This glory into which Jesus was received is described by himself also, at least as far as it could be described, in the seventeenth chapter of John, at the fifth verse: "And now O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He says, also, in another part, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."

The word "glory," in the Bible, denotes weight, whilst it means also splendor, radiance, light, or brilliance, impressive magnificence. Jesus was received into glory. That glory is made up of two intermingling beams, — creation glory, and redemption glory.

Of this glory, which may be called creation glory, the sun, the moon and the stars, are only the faint sparkles. The earth, with all its fruits and its flowers, its hills, its valleys, its magnificent landscapes, its streams, and its ocean that girdles it as with a glorious zone, — all is but a faint reflection of that innermost glory. The most beautiful sun in the universe of God is but a dim emanation from that glory; the most magnificent panorama, from the Alps to the hills that run

through our own island, is but a comma in the great page that is legible in the splendor of that glory. The brightest things and the most beautiful things in all creation are but reflections, faint, imperfect, and dimmed by their transit, of the richness and magnificence of that glory into which he that made them was received after he had redeemed them.

There is another ray in that glory to which he was received, which is redemption glory, and this is the intensest of all. The cross is in heaven, its most radiant thing. One beam of this glory is, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Another beam is, "Mercy and truth are met together; and righteousness and peace have kissed each other." And another beam of this excellent glory is, "God is a just God, and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus."

When I announce these facts, men do not receive them with the interest, with the intensity of interest, with which they receive some story I might tell, or some strange deed I might quote. The facts that are worthless of human regard man receives with ears pricked up, and with heart willing and waiting to receive their impression; but those great facts that constitute the burden of the harmonies of heaven — into which "angels desire to look," and the meaning and magnificence of which no inquiring study can ever exhaust, no inspection adequately sound — fall upon man's dead ear as dead things, in which, unfortunately for himself, he feels no deep and permanent interest. Yet there was not a tear that Jesus wept in Palestine that is not more precious than "orient pearl," and that is not still the wonder and the study of angels that are in glory. There is not a sentiment that the Man of Sorrows breathed from the cross, or from Gethsemane, that is not regarded, as indeed it is, as the profoundest philosophy by its most competent students — the

angels that are in heaven. His priestly office, his prophetic office, his kingly office, — the altar, the Bible, the throne, — are all the nuclei of the intensest sympathies, the objects of the deepest admiration, the burdens of the noblest songs. It is said in the apocalyptic vision, of Christ, that “I beheld a lamb as if it had been slain.” I wish I could use any language that could convey the full meaning of this. It implies that, in looking on the celestial glory, the seer saw a lamb just as if it had been that moment slaughtered in sacrifice; the meaning of which is, that the atonement is never forgotten in heaven. It is ever a fresh fact — ever studied, ever thought of, ever celebrated, ever gloried in, ever sung, throughout eternity. The facts of history, the phenomena of science, the triumphs of Alexander, the reign of Cæsar, the brilliant victories of Wellington, the literature of England, will all be lost as pebbles dropped into the sea; but what was done and suffered in that obscure nook of this world — Judæa — and in that mean capital of that obscure land — Jerusalem — will be sung and celebrated with growing fervor throughout the rolling ages and cycles of eternity. Let us pray, dear reader, that we may feel a deeper interest in this fact, that Christ died for sinners, than we do even in our firesides, or in our children, or in our lives or property; than in anything we are, or in anything that God in his providence has given us!

But the next, and perhaps the most interesting inquiry for us is, What is this fact, that Christ was received into glory, the evidence of?

It is, first, the evidence that his great sacrifice was finished and complete. It is proof that God saw and knew that it was so. If Christ had failed in that sacrifice, Christianity itself had been a failure. Bethlehem, that gave a cradle to its Lord, had presented a grave to the religion that he taught. Jesus had died a patient martyr, but he had not died an atoning victim. But the fact that he was received into glory

was the voice from heaven that he had finished transgression; made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. His own cry upon the cross, "It is finished!" rang through earth, produced a responsive echo beside the throne; and that voice now comes so musical, so precious, to us, "I have finished transgression; I have made an end of sin; I have finished the work that the Father gave me to do." That fact, of which we have eye-witness testimony, that Christ was received into glory, is to me a corroboration from God himself that Jesus exhausted the sin that was laid upon him — perfected the righteousness that was given him to do; and that in him we have a complete Saviour, and that to his work for us we need to add nothing that is supposed to be expiatory or meritorious. All that remains for us is to lay aside the convict dress of the penal colony to which sin has banished us, and to put on the bridal robe of that glorious righteousness that Christ has provided for us. All that we have now to do is to leave the prison-house in which sin has shut us up, and to enter into one of those mansions of glory which Christ has gone to prepare for us. We have nothing to pay, to suffer, or to add, or to do, in order to enter heaven; it is our privilege to take God at his word, and to accept heaven as a free gift, for Christ's sake only. Jesus is to us in virtue of that sacrifice; not a righteousness for us to imitate, but a righteousness for us to put on; not a mere model for us to conform to, but a merit to be transferred to our account, to be eloquent before God, and to prevail on our behalf. The entrance into glory of the Forerunner is the evidence that Christ's sacrifice is complete.

His reception into glory is no less the evidence to us that death and the grave have been overcome for us. The grave received him as a prisoner; it felt it had received instead its vanquisher. The grave could not hold the Lord of glory; it had no claim on him. He opened it for us. He conquered

it for us. He turned the prison into a pathway to the kingdom of heaven ; so that, when we descend into the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil ; for Christ has smoothed its ruggedness, and still goes with us. That glory into which he has entered casts one beam upon the grave he has left open, and another upon the death he has laid prostrate ; so that there appears to us a way, uninterrupted and unobstructed, from the deepest depth into which sin has plunged us, to the highest pinnacle of glory to which Christ has promised to raise us ; and already, though by anticipation, we may begin the triumphant song, " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The eye-witness testimony that he was received into glory is to us the demonstration that he took its sting from death, and its victory from the grave.

His reception into glory is sufficient proof that God is ready, willing, waiting, to receive us also ; for what relation did Christ sustain when he was received into glory ? That of our head. If the head has entered there, the members must soon be admitted there also. The earnest — the first-fruits, as the apostle calls him — is there ; and, if the first-fruits be entered into glory, the rest of the harvest will be admitted there also. Just with the same radiance, with the same welcome, with which God received Christ, will he receive, and does he receive now, the greatest sinner upon earth, that believes and looks up to him, into glory also. And he receives the sinner, not because of anything in the sinner, but because Christ was made sin for him, that that sinner might be made by Christ the righteousness of God. When we die, therefore, we do not go into the presence of a Judge that will try us, but into that of a Father who will graciously receive us ; we do not go into the presence of a Legislator satisfied, who will simply tolerate us, but we go into the presence of a wait-

ing Father, who delights to receive us, and to make heaven ring with the welcome, "This the lost is found, and the dead is made alive." No judge shall we meet at the judgment-day, but our Father. Not wrath shall we have to deprecate, but great love to receive. The fears and terrors with which some think of God belong to Mount Sinai, and ought to be left there. The joyful and hopeful anticipations with which thousands look forward to God are the true inspirations of Christianity, and the bright bequest that the Lord of Christianity has left us.

In this glory into which Christ is received he is preparing a place for us. He said himself to his sorrowing disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." Exquisite love, that, spurned, detested, crucified on earth, yet recollects the very souls that spurned it, and appeals to the very men that crucified it, and prepares, if they will, a place for them! "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come again, that where I am there ye may be also." He spent thirty years in tears, in sufferings, that ended in awful death, that we might be pardoned. He spends eternity now, that a place may be prepared for us. He died for us, that we might be forgiven; he lives for us, that we may be made meet for being happy forever. He redeemed by his blood these precious jewels; he is preparing by his life bright settings worthy of him and them. He set out by his sufferings and humiliation to seek the lost sheep; he lives and reigns upon his throne to prepare a fold for the recovered sheep. Truly it is a grand truth, Christ died for us. It is only eclipsed by that other truth, Christ ever liveth to prepare a place for us.

From this glory into which Christ has been received, he sends down his Holy Spirit to prepare us. He said himself to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for, if I go not away," that is, if I am not received into glory, "the Comforter will not come unto you." We may recollect

what difficulty the poor apostles felt in believing this. Can it be expedient that the parent should be borne away from his offspring? that the patron should be taken from his *protégé*? that the bird should be snatched from the brood that she protects? that the parent oak should be cut down, and that its parasite plants should be laid prostrate on the earth? How can so great a catastrophe be expedient? He told them that it was expedient; and his word was the strongest of all demonstrations that it really was so.

It was expedient for them that Christ should be received into glory, that they might no longer be taught to walk by sight, but to walk by faith. Whilst Christ was on the earth, in his humiliation, or after his resurrection, the apostles believed only what they saw, and obeyed only what they heard; and they felt then, as the sisters of Bethany felt before, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," — supposing that Christ must be personally present before any personal benefit could be received. But they needed to be taught to anticipate the far-off, and to believe in the unseen, and to be satisfied that the carnal eye should close upon the person of Jesus, that the spiritual eye might open upon him received into glory. Had Jesus remained upon the earth, the apostles had clustered around him, and leaned upon him in Judæa, as their prop and their pillar; but, by his removal from the earth, that which was the light of a district became a luminary in the sky, and the apostles, from being the ministers of a parish, went forth upon a mission that embraced the wide world. It is the great error of the Romish Church substantially to believe that Christ should not go away. Our doctrine is, that Christ is received into glory. The practical doctrine of the Roman Church is, that Christ is still suffering upon earth. Every Sunday morning, in every one of the nine hundred chapels of that communion in England, they believe that Christ comes down from heaven at the priest's bidding —

is laid upon the altar, where he is slain, and sacrificed, and offered up a propitiatory victim for the sins of the living and the dead. We believe, on the contrary, that Christ died once for all, and dieth no more; that he was received up into glory. We *believe* in him. The Romish Church must see him as with the senses. We are satisfied to see him by faith. She is not satisfied unless she can touch the hem of his garment. We are content to believe in the unseen. She will only accept that which she can handle. Hence she must have the wood of the true cross, the very robe that he wore, the holy coat, a visible altar, a visible sacrifice, a visible victim, a visible priesthood; in short, a practical denial that Christ is received into glory. All these things, we think, were completed when Christ died upon the cross, and said, "It is finished!" There was no more offering from that hour, — no more dying, no more atoning. We are complete in Christ, and need nothing more.

Some of the fruits of this reception into glory are most precious. I have mentioned one, — this gift of the Holy Spirit to prepare us for heaven. As long as one sinner remains upon this earth, whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life, so long the Spirit will descend from Christ "received into glory," to convince and to convert that sinner. We know that all his guests are not yet around his table; that all his jewels are not yet gathered and fixed in his glorious diadem; that all his crowns are not yet upon his head; that there are those who are destined to be the heirs of his kingdom in every quarter, in every capital, in every village of the globe; and only will the Spirit cease to descend at the bidding of Christ, who is now on the throne of his mediation, when the last sinner shall have been saved, and the last saint shall have been perfected, and made meet for the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Christ will not cease to send, and the Spirit will not cease to act, until faith shall be lost in fruition, and the

earth shall close as the earth commenced — in Paradise, in its yet richer glory.

Christ is also received into glory in order to intercede for us. It is just as important a fact, in the history of Christ, that he should plead and intercede for us while here militant on earth, as it was that he should have died upon the cross to redeem us by his precious blood. If Christ had not died, we never could have been pardoned. If Christ do not live in glory, we never can be saved. By his death he merited that we should have a right to heaven; by his life he takes care that we shall be made fit for heaven. Christ on the cross is only the commencement of what Christ upon the throne is the complement and the completion of; and, therefore, Christ, now received into glory, ever liveth, we are told, to make intercession for us. The very safety of our souls is contingent upon this fact, that Christ intercedes for us. The infidel says, God made the world, set it agoing, as a man does his watch, and left it. Many Christians seem to think that God redeemed us by Christ, and, having redeemed us, left us to make the best of our way along a rough and flinty road to heaven. In answer to the former, we assert that God made the world, and manages the world still. In answer to the latter, that Christ redeemed the sinner, and gives the sinner still the never-failing grace that fits him for glory. It is quite as essential that Christ should touch our hearts now from the throne as that Christ should redeem our souls by his blood upon the cross. "Simon, Simon," is addressed to every Christian, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat;" — that is our bane, — "but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;" — this is our safety. How precious is the truth, that Satan never dares to touch a Christian whom Christ has not by his previous intercession prepared to master the temptation! Satan hath desired to have thee; but, before Satan desired to have thee, I have prayed for thee, that thy

faith fail not. How comforting are the words, "to sift thee as wheat"! Satan does not sift chaff. It is not worth his while. He sifts wheat only. It is only Christians that he sifts. Others he lets alone: He knows that he holds in his grasp them that deny and despise the Gospel of Christ. Hence the very perseverance of Christians is contingent upon this intercession. "It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that has risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Therefore, St. Paul adds, "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." We have, what we may read at our leisure, a beautiful description of Christ's entrance into glory, in the very first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, where it is said: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the

heavens are the works of thine hands : they shall perish ; but thou remainest : and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up ; and they shall be changed : but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool ? ”

If, then, these are the facts that are connected with this reception of the Lord into glory, it is the very first natural inference from the whole, he is entitled to our instant reception, to the utmost confidence of all our hearts. Jesus is set forth a propitiation for us. This man we preach is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He became a babe, and was born in a manger, for us. He was a sufferer, and died upon the cross, for us. He reigns in heaven, having been received into glory, now for us ; and from that cross, and from that throne, he beseeches us, “ Be ye reconciled unto God.” If we reject him that spake on earth, how much more guilty shall we be if we reject him that now speaks in heaven ! Very strikingly, but very justly, was it said, “ If every transgression received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect ” — not reject — “ if we neglect so great salvation ? ” And then he adds, after the statement of this very truth, “ If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. . . . He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses ; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ! ” And again, he says, “ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth,” — that is, the Jews, — “ much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven ; ” — received up into

glory ; “ whose voice then shook the earth : but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.”

In the second place, if we receive this testimony, if we believe in this Christ received up into glory, let us rejoice that he has thus entered as the first-fruits of all that sleep. How delightful is it to know that our friends, our brethren, our babes, our relatives, who have fallen asleep in Christ, have already preceded us, and entered into that glory in which Christ now is ! Heaven will not be felt by us a foreign country. Our own nearest ones are actually there. Our own dear friends are worshipping there. That heavenly temple will have a more home-like aspect than the very sanctuary walls within which some of us have been baptized, and in which we and our fathers have worshipped for many a day. Our brethren are there ; our friends are there ; our great Forerunner, the great Elder Brother, is there.

If Christ be thus received up into glory, let us fix our hearts upon him. Where the treasure is, there the heart will be. “ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.” Let our afflictions lead us to lean on that sublime and glorious arm, and draw down from the glory where Christ is strength to invigorate and joys to comfort us, in our pilgrimage through time toward that rest that remains for the people of God.

Let us rejoice in the hope that we, too, shall be received into glory. If we are his people, his members, part of his body, branches of that vine, either Christ will come and cover the earth with his glory, or, if we are not spared to that day, we may believe that we shall be admitted to that glory in which he is, and reigns at present. Let all the sadness of our sufferings upon earth have, as their blessed set-off, the glory into which we shall then be received. Let the gloom

that now falls down upon us in this nether valley be lighted up by that coming splendor, whose fount, the inexhaustible Sun, shall never be sealed. And when the curtain of death shall cover our eyes, as the curtain of night comes down on the landscape of the earth, it will reveal above us in the splendid heavens a richer glory than that it conceals below on the shrouded earth. Let the very roughness of the road be contrasted frequently by us with that blessed home into which we shall soon be gathered; that bright rest in which we shall abide forever; that holy Zion, the gates of which shall shut in all that is beautiful, and shut out all that is sad. When there, we shall enjoy the retrospect of the toils we have come through, and the battles we have fought, and the sacrifices we have made. We shall enjoy the retrospect of these the more, that they are contrasted with the blessedness that encompasses us. The sailor, when he comes to old age, and to the home in which he is to spend it, looks back upon the rough waves, and upon the rocks he narrowly escaped, and sees in them a beauty that he never saw, and thinks of them with an ecstasy and a joy he never felt before; and just because he contrasts them with the safety and peace that he now enjoys. And so we may look back from that loftier Pisgah, and recount every struggle, and see far back into the time we have passed through, and discover all radiant with the splendor of that happiness which terminates all trials, and begins all joy and felicity forever.

If Christ received into glory lives for us, the least we can do is to live for him. If he pleads for us in heaven, let us plead for him on earth. Let us be his witnesses to the world, the advocates of his cause, the living epistles that he has written, glorifying him, and spreading his Gospel among others that are ignorant of his truth. May this be alike our duty and our destiny too, for Christ's sake !

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEAVENS AND EARTH ON FIRE.

- “ The day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away ! —
What power shall be the sinner’s stay ?
How shall he meet that dreadful day ?
- “ When, shrivelling, like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll,
And louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead ; —
- “ O ! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be thou, O Christ ! the sinner’s stay,
When heaven and earth shall pass away.”

“ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ? ” — 2 PETER 3 : 10—12.

THERE are many days distinctive and important in the experience of us all ; but there is one great day which we have not yet seen. Its arrival is certain. The time of its arrival no man knoweth. They only who are the Lord’s are safe at that day. Then he will keep as his jewels, and spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him. Amid many

days will be one called the day of the Lord. There are many years; but there will be one year of the recompenses of Zion. Each year, as it is gathered to its grave, — or, rather, as it ascends at the bidding of him that sent it, — deposits its records, written over with accusations against us all. We trust and believe that louder than its loudest accusations is heard the blood of Jesus, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. The past is irrevocable. The mightiest king or emperor on earth cannot recall it. The word once spoken cannot be unspoken. That word will either rise in crashing reverberations at the judgment-day, overwhelming some, or it will be reflected in sweet music, and in ten thousand echoes, from the great white throne, acquitting and justifying others. The deed done cannot be undone. What tremendous significance is there in the faintest word man utters, in the humblest act man does, in the least relationship into which man enters. Words spoken, deeds done, may be forgotten by us; but they can never be unspoken, they can never be undone. They have preceded us to the presence of God, — in the case of God's people, to be forgiven; in the case of unbelievers, to be against them never-ceasing witnesses. Year after year passes away, with ups and downs, losses and gains, sorrows and joys, leaving, each, heavy hearts to some, bright hopes to others, gray hairs to more, — gaps, chasms, bereavements, privations, changes to all. What a momentous period in the biography of man is one single year! What issues does it embosom! How beautiful, how appropriate that prayer which David learned long ago, and which will never be expunged from the liturgy of loving and believing hearts, "Teach us, O Lord, so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!"

As sure as the old year passes away, the old earth, and the old atmosphere, and the old heavens, — as far as those heavens are connected with us, — will pass away, too; at

least in their outward configuration and aspect. If the earth were sensitive, one would suppose it must long to be dissolved. Its groans have lasted now for six thousand years; the whole creation has been groaning, and travailing in pain, waiting to be delivered. If the earth have an ear, it must be weary with hearing the sobs and the cries of its children pining on it. If the earth have feeling, it must be weary with receiving into its bosom the ceaseless current of the dying, the ever-lengthening procession of the dead. And if it can have hopes,—and the apostle represents it as having all,—it must long for that glorious hour when the sons of God shall be manifest; when the desert shall rejoice; when there shall be no more grief, nor death, nor sorrow, nor sighing, nor losses, nor bereavements; when the voice that made the earth shall recast it in more than its pristine beauty, — “Behold, I make all things new; and the tabernacle of God is now with men.”

Peter tells us that when the day of the Lord shall come vast changes will take place. Let us study the import of that expression — “The day of the Lord.” Every day, in one sense, belongs to the Lord. Each day is the creation of God; each dawns fresh and pure from the skies, as if just made a missionary from God, and a source of new responsibility to man. It comes to us beautiful as when it dawned upon Ararat, or shone upon Mount Zion. Each speaks to each of us its message, and then retires behind the western hills, to lay its report before God.

There is another day of the Lord, called the Sabbath day. Kings have their coronation days, their festivals, their anniversaries. The King of kings has his day—that most beautiful of all the days of the week, still preserved to us, in spite of the superstition that would darken it, and the infidelity that would steal it, or, more powerful than either, the avarice that would absorb it into the current of the others

That day is still spared. It is called the Lord's day. In one respect it may be emphatically called man's day; for then the ceaseless wheel stops on its axis, the din of Mammon is suspended, and in the quiet of that beautiful and peaceful day one can hear the very chimes of heaven, and hold communion with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus. The Sabbath day, then, is also the day of the Lord in one aspect, and the day of man in another.

There are still other days that may be called days of the Lord. There is the day of the birth of Jesus — now known by the papal name — Christmas day. It is a pity it is so called. One wants to get rid of papal names, as well as of papal things. The name is derived from Christ's mass. We have nothing to do with masses. The mass is justly called in the Thirty-nine Articles a blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit. But still, whatever name that day may bear in the vocabulary of men, that quiet, that beautiful time should never be forgotten, when the babe was born in Bethlehem whom kings came from afar to worship, whose glories angels bowed the heavens to sing and celebrate, in glad tones, in glorious accents, which shall not cease until they have been translated into every tongue, and have mingled with the noise of the sea-waves and with the everlasting jubilee: — "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

There is another Lord's day, — the day of the Redeemer's death. What a day was it! What a deed was done on it! If one could only feel it, not as a naked historical incident, but as a fact in which we have so tremendous a stake, that the Son of God came into the world — the Creator of it — to be by his death the Redeemer of it! What a tragedy was there! what a solemn deed was done! What a burden was removed, what a glory was accomplished, when he cried upon the cross, in words of blent agony and victory, — all bitter-

ness to him, all blessing to us, — “It is finished!” That was indeed the Lord’s day.

There was the day, too, of his resurrection, when the Lord rose from that grave that received him, in its ignorance, as a victim, in his might as its conqueror; when he burst the bars of the tomb, laid aside all its trappings, and afterwards arose in the sight of a few disciples from the Mount of Olives, and the cloud carried him out of sight to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; and when there came from the bosom of that cloud that sweet promise that has sustained and cheered the church ever since, — “This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go.”

These are the chief days of the Lord. But the day we are now considering is so emphatically. It is burdened with a peculiar mission, it is associated with different events, it is lighted by its own significant light, it is called the day of the Lord in almost every epistle of the New Testament, and in almost every one it is more or less described. In the Old Testament, Joel calls it “The great and terrible day of the Lord;” Malachi, “The day that shall burn as an oven;” and the Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says, “Ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For, when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren,” that is, believers, “are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” It is also described in the first chapter of his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians: “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his

power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." Such are some descriptions of that day ; and certainly in all these respects it presents a contrast to all previous days. When Christ was born, when the day of his birth dawned upon Bethlehem, a few shepherds only were gathered around the cradle, and a few small kings from a distant land, to be the earnest and the type of what will be. But on this last day he shall come, not with a few, but with innumerable angels ; not with the borrowed glory that these magi could impart, but in the glory of his Father ; and the king, as it is predicted in St. Matthew, shall sit upon his throne. At that day, a tiny star, that shot from the firmament, was the only guide, and the only light that illuminated the spot where Jesus lay ; but on this day, it is proclaimed and predicted by Peter, the sun and the moon and the stars shall be merged in the greater and intenser splendor of him who is the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, and because of whose glory it needs not the sun, nor the moon ; for the glory of God and of the Lamb do lighten it. At a former day, Jesus stood at Pilate's bar : at this day, Pilate shall stand at his. In a former day, nations shouted, "Crucify him !" crucify him !" at that day, an innumerable multitude that no man can number, — for, blessed be God ! a mighty multitude will yet be numbered with the saved, — shall shout and sing, "Hosanna ! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ! glory, and honor, and thanksgiving, and praise, be unto our God !" Then, he was spoken of as the son of Mary ; now, he will be praised as the Son of God. Then, he was constrained to say, with terrible significance, "The foxes of the earth have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man" — he that made the earth, and feeds the birds — "has not where to lay his head." Truly, he emptied himself, and made himself of

no reputation. But, on this day, the heavens shall be his throne, the earth his footstool, and all creation his consecrated and his faithful ministry. At that day, all greatness was associated with visible grandeur ; at this last day, true greatness shall be seen to be moral and spiritual only. All the pomp and the pageantry of Cæsar will at this day be no more valued than the humblest field-flower ; while the loving soul, the regenerated heart, the humble mind, the trusting believer, the life that is adorned by whatsoever things are just, and pure, and lovely, shall be arrayed with a glory in comparison of which the glory of Solomon shall be as nothing.

Now, Peter says, the day on which all this, and more than this, will be seen and transacted, will come. "The day of the Lord," he says, "will come." Its advent is absolutely certain. It has been so with past days. Time is humbling to man ; and the more that we contrast what man is with what God is, the more we see how weak, in comparison, he is. No power in the last year, — not all the united patronage, influence, wealth, power, philosophy of the world combined, — could have prevented the approach of the present. We may as well try to prevail upon the waves of the sea to go back, and not rise, in the approaching tide, from the attraction of the sun and moon, as to make the year to stand still, and rest himself for a little, or the years to forbear to come, and wait till we are ready to receive them. So with this day. No power can adjourn it ; no patronage can put it off. On it comes like the advancing tide, like the increasing waves ; not scorning man, not mocking man, but careless and regardless whether man is ready, or not, in the sight of God.

But he says, not only will this day certainly come, but it will also be sudden : "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ;" that is, just when we least expect it that day of the Lord will come. "Behold, I come as a thief." Let us notice the expression or symbol. When Jesus repre-

sents himself by anything that is good, he calls himself that thing: "I am the bread of life," "I am the good shepherd," "I am the morning star;" but when the illustration is derived from what is in itself evil, he says, he shall come *as* a thief in the night, not a thief in the night; it is the suddenness and the unexpectedness of the advent that are by this phrase vividly illustrated. While he comes thus suddenly, no one can say when it will be. The signs of his advent we are called upon to look at. Our Lord blames the Pharisees for not studying them. In fact, all prophecy is more or less a disclosure of a series of signs, and foretokens, to give us some idea when Christ shall come. But that day, and that hour, knoweth no man. Whatever eye attempts to penetrate God's secret purposes will be blinded with the excessive light. No man, saint, or angel, has seen, or can see it, or bear to see it. The certainty of it, the suddenness of it, we are assured of. The exact chronology of it we know not, nor can we know. What would be the use of telling us the chronology of it? There is no doubt of our appearing there. When we are called upon to appear at an earthly court, we are bound over to appear at a day fixed; but there is no risk of our non-appearance at that day, there is no fear of our mistaking or not seeing it. We must all appear on that day, and at that throne. The great inquiry with us should be, not when Christ comes, but, What is Christ to us? Our great inquiry should not be, on what day he will come, but, Has he come into our hearts by his Holy Spirit "to-day," and taken up his throne and his residence there? It is by the inner light of "Christ in us, the hope of glory," that we shall best see the outer light, — Christ, who is to be admired in all them that believe. The chronology of the day is not the great thing: preparation of heart for the day is the instant duty, the blessed privilege, the cordial offer to all. Some calm, quiet night, when half the world has lulled itself to

sleep, — the man of business arranging for the morrow's work, the laborer refreshing himself for the morrow's toils, — in that still night a sound loud and piercing shall be heard, that will reverberate in crashing repetitions through the graves of the dead, and the innermost chambers of the living, till Pharaoh shall hear it in his pyramidal tomb, and the beggar in his wayside grave; and the living saints shall be transformed at that royal sound, and the dead saints shall emerge from their graves to meet him, while the living that are left shall be destroyed in that great and terrible day of the Lord; for they would not have this man to rule over them. Thus "a thief in the night" may be almost a chronological symbol. The origin of the Jewish Passover was the fact that the angel of death passed through Egypt in the night-time — a night never to be forgotten.

It may be asked, Is not death of equal consequence to us? Death truly, I allow, determines our opportunities; yet the question is not, What is apparently the strongest motive for ministers to preach, according to our estimate or apprehension, but, What motive does God present in his holy word? Now, it is most remarkable that the day of death is never, or at least very rarely, set before us in Scripture as our great constraining motive: it is always the day of the Lord, the last day, the day when the Lord comes. In the case of a Christian, death is not an interruption, but only a removal. Regeneration is his first change; death his second; the resurrection his crowning one. Death to the Christian is not a desirable thing; the presence of the Lord is so. The prospect constantly inculcated in the Bible, as the hope of saints, is the coming of the day of the Lord. Let it be enshrined in our hearts, and inspire our dearest hopes!

In a moment, then, when the world shall be saying Peace! peace! Christ shall come; not "like the light that shines more and more unto the perfect day," but like the lightning

that flashes from the east even unto the west, in one burst of intolerable splendor. He will come, not with the still small voice with which he came to Bethlehem, but with thunder, and the voice of the trumpet, and with great noise. He shall speak to the dead, Rise! and to the living, Be ye changed! and in the twinkling of an eye it shall be done. On that day none will have time to turn back to save a pin, much less to save an immortal soul. The instant that it dawns, the possibility of acceptance to those that have not been previously accepted shall be gone. The instant that trumpet is heard, that instant the sounds of grace — so long set forth and so long despised — will be silent: it is the arrest, the termination of the day of grace; it is the commencement of the day of fixture of character, of judgment, and of irreversible decision.

When that day comes, the apostle tells us that “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise.” What can be meant by “the heavens”? Does it mean that the sun, and moon, and stars, shall all be utterly expunged? that those innumerable orbs that sparkle in the infinitude of space shall all be quenched? that worlds that are not implicated in our sins, and therefore may not be expected to share in our judgments, shall be equally punished with us? I think not. It seems to me the most natural and fair interpretation, that the last fire shall reach wherever the first sin has smitten, and its curse has struck, and only there; that the limits of the last fire shall be the limits of the effects of man’s first sin; in short, that when the Bible speaks of the heavens in this place, it speaks in popular language of what we call the sky. The child may think it is a beautiful dome, the floor of his Father’s house; the poet may call it so; the popular mind regards it as a concave ceiling; but the scientific man knows that it is only the atmospheric air lighted up with sunbeams, or shaded with clouds from the earth, with the round globe floating in it. And far beyond it, beyond even what the

most powerful telescope can reveal, are worlds on worlds, moving in the innocence of their first creation, wondering as they inquire, like the angels, concerning things transacted here, and yet not implicated in our sins, nor to be visited with our judgments. I understand, therefore, by "the heavens," simply the air that encloses the earth. At that day, we infer that the air shall become one sheet of flame, clasping the earth in its burning bosom; all the elements of combustion in it and within its reach being sustained and fed by one of the gases that compose it, namely, oxygen, the great secret and excitement of all combustion. The whole earth, from its loftiest hill to the depths of its deepest mine, will be penetrated by fire. The tainted air shall thus be purged. It is predestinated to this. Jesus breathed it as the earnest that it will be so. The fire shall fulfil its mission, and make pure, and perfect, and healthy, forever, that air which, perhaps from its taint, is the source of our worst and most wasting diseases. It is just because of this that it is said, "The people of the Lord shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." They shall be caught up out of the fire. Even if they were in it, they would not be burned. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, walked in the seven times heated furnace just as if they walked on beds of roses, and as if they breathed the most delicious Eastern air. So that, when this great flame shall wrap the earth, those that are united to the Lord shall not be scathed; they shall be sheltered under his outstretched pinions. Neither earthquake nor hurricane, nor flame nor flood, has any mission to injure them who are in Christ Jesus.

It is said, "The heavens shall pass away." The words "pass away" and "perish" are used plainly in a relative sense. For instance, in speaking of the flood, in this very same chapter, the apostle says, "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished;" he does not

mean that it was annihilated, but that it underwent a change of conformation, and became fitted for the new inhabitants that were to be upon it. So, when Peter says "the heavens shall pass away," it means (as the original Greek word may be translated) "pass over," "pass from one state to another." So, when we say the atmosphere shall perish, we mean that it shall be disintegrated, in order to be transformed; that it shall pass from a state of corruption, which it now has, to a state of incorruptibility and perfection that it will then have.

But it is not only said that the heavens shall "pass away," but that "the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Whether this word "elements" is used in its strictly philosophical sense, or in its popular sense, is of no consequence; it clearly means that all the constituent parts of the earth shall undergo a great change, entire disorganization, complete disintegration. As the gold and the silver, when smelted in the crucible, come out purer, and the dross only is consumed, so will it be with these elements. They will be purified, not annihilated. Nothing that God made shall be destroyed, but everything that man has tainted shall then and there be purified. When Jesus, as I have said, breathed the air, he gave it in so doing an earnest of its restoration, and set it apart for its last consecration. When the Holy Spirit descended in tongues of fire, he laid hold of that fire, and set it apart for its use in the last baptism. When Jesus shed his blood upon the earth, he consecrated that earth, now usurped by Satan, to be one day governed and controlled by himself. We believe, therefore, that nothing on the earth that God made shall be annihilated, but that out of everything shall be expunged and thrust that which taints and fevers and convulses it — the sin that God did not make, which man only is responsible for.

Hence it is said by the apostle, "The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." It is remarkable

that the sacred writer describes the earth in terms that indicate that it has within it all the elements of its own combustion, even at this moment. He says, in the seventh verse, "The heavens and the earth which are now by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." I think I have remarked before, that it ought to be translated, "are kept stored with fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." In other words, this statement is borne out — not that Scripture needs to be borne out — by all the discoveries and researches of scientific men. All geologists, almost without exception, have come to the conclusion that the form of the earth — an oblate spheroid, to use their own language — indicates that when it first revolved upon its axis it was in a semi-liquid state, from fervent heat. Its equatorial axis is longer than its polar axis, arising, no doubt, from its revolving and centrifugal force. It is beautiful to find that what men are discovering in science is really only discovering facts which God has recorded in his word; and therefore I notice what all geologists state, that there are evidences of the action of heat in the early strata of the earth. For instance, in the primitive rocks, which are crystallized, and which indicate previous great heat, there are no organic remains whatever, because life could not have lived there. They constitute merely the outer surface of the globe, or the "crust that gradually cooled down;" so that there are overwhelming proofs that the bosom of the earth is not solid, but wholly filled with liquid fire, of which volcanoes are the occasional outlets and safety-valves, when, as it often happens, the water and the fire meet; and thus the last discovery of geology is the declaration of St. Peter, that "the earth is stored with fire" against that day. Were other evidences required, it has been shown, by experiment, that for every hundred feet that we descend in the earth the thermometer rises one

degree ; that is, the heat becomes greater the deeper we bore. All this indicates that we walk upon the crust of a globe in the bosom of which is liquid fire, from which God has but to withdraw that hand that keeps the imprisoned elements, and, as the water rushed forth and deluged it of old, an ocean of red liquid fire will rush forth, and the earth and all the things that are upon it shall be burned up.

It is very remarkable, too, and it is worth recollecting this, when I speak of fire purifying the air, and the earth, and all the things that are there,—or not annihilating the globe, but only carrying it over to a purer, and a healthier, and a nobler condition,—that the experiments which have been witnessed in places where fire has exerted its action show that there is a fertilizing power in the application of heat to the earth not generally suspected. So true is this, that some eminent naturalists have said that it only requires a volcano in the central deserts of Africa to make them fertile and blossom like the rose. Wherever fire has been applied to barren districts by volcanic or other action, there the earth has brought forth golden harvests of corn where briers and thistles have grown before. What are these which God vouchsafes to man, but earnest of agreement between creation and Scripture, to increase his confidence in His word, and to show that there is a unity between science and revelation—supposed by sciolists to be discord—which proves that the one has no reason to be afraid of the disclosures of the other?—that, as all truths come from God, all truths shall return to God? and that science, and poetry, and revelation, and all things that are true, shall reflect the glory of him that made them, and celebrate the praises of him who has purified them again, and consecrated them to himself? The earth shall be burned up. This is not only scripturally true, but analogically probable. I was reading lately that astronomers have discovered in the firmament burning worlds. Very extraordinary is the fact,

which some will scarcely credit, that during the last three hundred years thirteen fixed stars have disappeared totally; and several of them were seen, first of all, in a state of intense dazzling brilliancy, as if in process of intense combustion; afterwards they became very red; and next they appeared as a white ash, that is, calcined; and finally they disappeared. La Place, not the least celebrated astronomer that ever lived, believes that these were worlds burned up. Their history we know not. I relate the fact only to show that the tube of the astronomer, as well as the hammer of the geologist, take each their turn to demonstrate how probable is every statement in Scripture made by the Holy Spirit—how true is every word of God. Thus calcined stars witnessed above us remind us what awaits the earth.

If the earth itself be spared, much on it will not be spared at all. Those monuments raised to commemorate illustrious worth shall fall. Those statues that have been erected on their pedestals to do honor to accomplished genius shall be calcined in the fervent heat of the last fire. Those palaces and noble halls, those bridges and triumphal arches, shall all melt like wax in the red flame. If we felt this, instead of raising monuments of bronze, and sepulchres of stone, to commemorate the brave who have fought, or the good who have fallen, however just, we should rather raise churches and schools. The monuments of stone that we raise shall be burned up; the children that we enlighten, the souls we gather to sanctified instruction, are the living stones which will defy the last fire that burns up all besides, and live and shine like the stars in the firmament for ever and ever. Let us expend less upon the structure of our schools, more upon the instruction of our children. Let us spend less in adding to the architectural beauties and material splendor of our churches, and more in improving the homes and dwellings of the poor, enlightening the minds of the ignorant, sanctifying

and saving precious souls. The time is so short, that it is not worth while building cathedrals; but, because the time is so short, it is more than ever worthy of our intensest effort to save souls. All that is human on the earth, its brightest and noblest things, shall decay; all that has been impressed by God upon the living tablets of the loving heart shall never be obliterated.

A remarkable instance of the value of this distinction was presented on that occasion when the apostles came to our Lord, and said, "Behold, what manner of stones the temple is built of;" pointing out to our blessed Redeemer those gigantic stones that have not been left one upon another, and that great temple which was the glory and the beauty of the whole earth, so magnificent that the heathen came from afar to admire it. The apostles were so struck with it, so overwhelmed with its magnificence, that they called the attention of their Lord to it, as the grandest thing near. He, indeed, attended to it; but it was after a pause. Some greater fane first attracted his notice. While they were beholding the great stones and glorious architecture, he had been watching a poor widow casting her mite upon the altar. He first and chiefly noticed a living stone never to be removed, and he called their attention to it as to a living temple, in which the Holy Ghost dwelt, infinitely more interesting. He thus taught us that not the material, but the moral, is great; not the building, but the Builder, is precious; not the outer, but the inner work, that comes from the Holy Spirit of God, is lasting. Thus the earth, and all the things that are on it, shall be burned up. All the works that man has raised,—all the trophies of illustrious victories, all that commemorates great worth, all that is tributary to exalted genius,—all poetry that has not God for its beginning, its middle, and its end,—all painting that tends only to magnify and to prompt idolatry,—will all be burned up. The moral, the

pure, and the responsible, will alone survive. Therefore the apostle asks, "If these things be so, what manner of persons ought we to be?"

At that day Antichrist shall be utterly destroyed, "whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the—*ἐπιφάνεια τῆς παρουσίας*—splendor of his personal appearance."

Another event predicted to take place on that day will be the utter destruction of the unbelieving and the unregenerate there. "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name called The Word of God. And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God." Out of the mouth of this person "goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

To countless thousands that will be an unexpected day; to

thousands more it will be very sorrowful and very sad. Strange will be the groups, terrible the sorrows, it reveals. Let us try, if we can, to realize it; let us anticipate, if it be possible, the shout of the archangel, and the trumpet of God. Realize, if you can, dear reader, that piercing sound, which no walls shall intercept, which no grave's green sod or monument of bronze shall be able to obstruct. Conceive, if you can, that terrible crash, when the very pillars of the world shall collapse, and the earth writhe in one sheet of flame, and all things upon it blaze as crackling thorns. Then forms, ceremonies, names, shibboleths, sects, pontificals, rituals, rubrics, statutes, crosier, crown, and sceptre, all things upon the earth, shall be burned up as cobwebs in the devouring flame. Then our museums, our colleges, our academies, our poetry, our painting, our riches,—all that man now glories in, all that he makes a substitute for God, or with which he shall endeavors to supersede God,—shall be burned up. But there shall remain no waste; a new genesis shall take place, a new and nobler world shall emerge, made fit for the dwelling-place of the sanctified and waiting people of God. The earth will not be annihilated; nothing will be annihilated but sin. There is no discoverable necessity for annihilating the earth; there is no declaration that it will be so.

“What manner of persons, then, ought we to be?” This great revolution will take place: it may be in our day. We cannot guess the day, or the hour. The only lesson that the certain advent of it preaches is, “Be ye ready.” “What manner of persons ought we to be?” Not, what manner of profession ought we to make? or, what manner of persons ought we to seem? but, “what manner of persons ought we to be?” Being, not seeming, is the demand of the gospel of Christ.

Then, this world, as it now is, is not our rest. There is no spot in it that is permanent; there is no house we can build

that we shall inhabit forever; there is no real home in this present constitution of things: its flowers wither, its lights go out, its circles are broken up. We are removed from ours, or ours are removed from us. As it is, it is not our rest. Then, our hearts and our hopes should not centre here; they should be above, "looking," says the apostle, "for the day of God." Where our heart is there our treasure is. The gold we now so covet let us covet less. The honors we now thirst for let us thirst for less. The absorbing interest that things seen and temporal pour into our hearts let us resist, mitigate, or subdue. We are not called upon to come out of the world; we are to be in it, but not to be of it. We are not called upon to abjure everything that is becoming and useful in the world; but we are to weep as though we wept not, and to rejoice as though we rejoiced not; using the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of it speedily passeth away.

We ought to think of the safety of the soul, as the great consideration against that day. What will it profit a man if he gain the whole of a world that is doomed to the flames, and lose his own soul? Let us take this arithmetic for our study, and calculate, if we can, that problem, "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" A soul regenerated by the Holy Spirit will emerge from the blaze of a dissolving world, and be happy forever with the Lord. A soul that covets the honors of the world, and has its portion upon the earth, but is not regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, shall utterly perish on that day.

Let our zeal be deepened and increased in every good work. Let us do good to the souls of men, and good also to the bodies of men, as we have opportunity. As the time gets shorter, let our energies grow intenser. What we have not done last year we cannot now do; but we may redeem the time, we may redouble our exertions. Wherever Christ's

cause has a claim, wherever Christ's people have a want, wherever good is possible, there obligation begins. We are responsible to God for all the good that we can do.

Let us stand grateful for every blessing, and ready for every duty; holy hearts giving vigor to industrious hands. Let us bear patiently the trials of life. They will soon be over,—very soon. To the aged they must speedily be over. To the whole world they will soon be over. The apostle expresses what we feel that we want, "You have need of patience; in your patience possess your souls."

Let us, in the next place, watch and wait, and look for that day. The apostle says, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." Looking for acceptance in the blood of Christ. Looking forward for blessedness and happiness with Christ. "My soul waiteth for the Lord," should be our experience. "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come." Christ in us the hope of glory should be the earnest of Christ coming to us, to be with us, and we with him, forever.

We need greater confidence and earnestness in God's word. Let us cleave less to anything that is in the world, and listen less to any voice uttered even from its highest oracle; and confide more in this blessed book, as our directory, our light, our guide. Fashion will appeal to our senses, in order to attach us to its votaries. Party in the church will try to proselyte us to its shibboleth. Satan will labor to quench that bright light which the Lord has kindled in the inner chambers of the soul, and gather up and wield polished weapons in order to crush God's cause, making his strongest effort, as he knows he has but a little time. We must cleave to what God pronounces to be true, though the whole world with a voice of thunder should shout, "It is a lie!" We must make up our minds to accept as our only road to happiness and peace that which God prescribes, although num-

bers, and rank, and fashion, and dignity, and pomp, and splendor, should all go the opposite way. We know not, and we care not, what may be the consequences. Great events thunder at our doors; every year brings forth unexpected issues; the wheels of nature revolve on their heated axles with increasing rapidity; but all these work together for good to us now, if we work from love to Christ. The changes of each year, lately so startling, are presignificant of the end. Last year, changes! the year before that, changes! all teaching us that the earth and the things thereof shall all be dissolved and burned up. In 1850 alone, an illustrious English statesman passed away from this stage, from things seen to things unseen. The President of the American States was taken from his presidency to his last account. The King of the French, that memorial of vicissitude, of change, of conflict, of uncertainty, of trial, has gone to where the weary are at rest and the wicked do not trouble. A judge was taken from the bench; a royal duke from his coronet. Statuaries, poets, painters, literary men, all saw its dawn, not its close. Did any one of them feel, in the hour and agony of death, the preciousness of the things he was leaving? or did they not all feel, as they never felt before, the magnificence of the things on which they were entering? Let us look at riches, and pomp, and state, and learning, in the light of the blaze of the last fire, and we shall see how poor and worthless they are. Let us look at the soul, at the Bible, at conscience, at a Saviour, at God, as we shall look at these things when we lie down to die. We shall thus learn what a gigantic importance belongs to the least of them all. Let not our waking hours be dreams, or our dying hours will be terrible realities. Be now assured, dear reader, where you are, what you are, whither you are going. Let us determine, by God's grace, that if last year has closed upon any of us without any well-founded reason or hope of believing that we are the children

of God, next year shall not long dawn upon us without our determining that, for us and ours, we will serve the Lord. Nothing will outlast the days into which we are plunging but living and real religion. All shams, all pretences, all make-believes, all pompous but empty professions, all human creeds, certainly all human superstitions, will be utterly burned up. The age of reality comes in; the age of truth dawns, and its conflict with the lie that is opposed to it will become daily more severe. The truth is being more and more disentangled, as well as more charged with earnestness; and the co-relative lie grows more and more consolidated and in earnest, too. But the close of that last battle of which the Apocalypse speaks will not be the defeat, but the triumph, of the people of God. Their conquest is absolutely sure; and when the earth and the things that are therein shall be burned up, we shall discover that God has prepared for us "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

CHAPTER V.

THE PALINGENESIA; OR, THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

“Region of life and light,
Land of the good whose weary toils are o’er !
Not frost nor heat may blight
Thy vernal beauty, fertile shore,
Yielding thy blessed fruits forevermore.”

“And earth shall live again, and, like her sons,
Have resurrection to a better being ;
And waken, like a bride, or like a morning,
With a long blush of love, to a new life.”

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”—2 Pet. 3 : 13, 14.

I SHOWED in the former chapter the nature and the characteristics of the day which is here called emphatically “the day of the Lord.” I have shown the certainty of its approach by the fact that it is declared by God ; the suddenness of its approach is seen in the illustration which is here employed ; “as a thief,” it will come, “in the night.” Among the events and acts of that day, the earth, now stored with fire, shall be burned up ; all the things that are on it,—that which ambition pants for, that which avarice hugs, that which unsanctified human nature regards as the main thing,—shall all be utterly consumed ; the atmosphere, or the heaven which wraps it, shall also be set on fire ; and, if it be

true, as it unquestionably is, that all these things shall be dislocated, disorganized, dissolved, then how little a space ought things thus perishing to occupy in our hearts; how little comparative anxiety should we feel about them; and how much more than ever should we set our hearts, not upon things that are seen, that are thus temporal, but upon things which are unseen, which are here pronounced to be eternal!

"Nevertheless," says St. Peter, "we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

In the very heart of the chaos there shall begin a genesis of order, beauty, and peace. The old earth shall put off its ashen robes, and array itself in its bridal garments. The world, we are told, shall close as the world began, — with Eden. An Easter morn of beauty shall dawn on the earth. Nature groans and travails in pain, waiting to be delivered. "*Natura*," or nature, about to bring to the birth, shall bring forth a new world. This is the hope of each new year, this is the joyous anticipation of the people of God: we "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

This expectation is no matter of conjecture. The language of Peter is, "We, according to *his promise*, look for new heavens and a new earth." Where is his promise to be found? The place where this great promise is written, and evidently that to which Peter here alludes, is the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, at the seventeenth verse, where we have a picture of what the new heavens and new earth will be: "For, behold," saith the Lord, "I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create" — here is its first feature — "Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping

shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days : for the child shall die an hundred years old ; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them ; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit ; they shall not plant, and another eat ; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble ; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock ; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." Here, then, is the promise that Peter evidently quotes ; and this vision, thus quoted and referred to by Peter as soon to be fulfilled, is described as one day to be actualized in fact, and made the possession of the people of God, in these sublime and impressive words of John, the seer at Patmos : "I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away." And then he proceeds, in language pervaded by the loftiest elo-

quence, instinct with the richest poetry, inspired of God, and clearly intelligible to man, to make known the splendors of that city that hath foundations, and the glory and blessedness of the new heavens and the new earth for which we, according to his promise, at this moment look. The arrival of it is certain. The chaos that already begins is only the disorganization that precedes new combinations. The conflagration of the air, the burning of the earth, the dissolution of all visible things, is only preparatory to that "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Let the certainty of the prospect cheer us. Let us look for it, not as for a peradventure which may not be, but as for the fulfilment of a promise so true, so sure, that he who uttered it has said, "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or one tittle of my word shall not pass away till all be fulfilled."

Columbus gathered from science, and from the balance of the sea and land on the orb on which we tread, that there must be a great western continent; and, having faith in the accuracy of his inference, he stood to his conclusion. His crew rose in rebellion against him. The great sea-billows threatened to engulf him. Storm and tempest without, and famine and pestilence within, all cried out, "Columbus, turn, and set sail again for home." But that great man had a deep conviction in his soul, and by faith in that conviction he reached the shore of the western continent, and made the discovery of America. He strove for an earthly kingdom; we hope for a heavenly: he for what is called, by a license of speech, a new world; we for what is really "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

I know that some have tried to establish the conclusion that the "new heavens and new earth" is merely a descriptive metaphor of blessedness and joy which shall be realized by all the people of God. If there were scriptural texts to prove that it really is thus to be construed, I should be the

last to demur to such an interpretation. But when I see the language of prophecy, and the whole tenor of Scripture, clearly and unequivocally indicating that the earth we now inhabit is to be restored, that the air we now breathe is to be regenerated, and that nothing is to be consumed in the last flame but that which the devil has introduced and which man has accepted, — in short, that this world, which God made, and pronounced good and beautiful at its first creation, is to be re-made, and re-constituted at least as good and beautiful again, — I must adhere to the literal interpretation now so generally adopted. It appears to me most natural, and most readily to present itself to an unprejudiced reader. The apostle Paul evidently anticipated such a creation as this when he said, “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, of which we speak.” That expression, “the world to come,” is literally the age or the dispensation that is to come; and he assumes that that dispensation which is to come is to be upon the earth we now inhabit, and under that air which we now breathe.

Analogies strengthen this opinion. The resurrection of my body is not to be the creation of another body, but the regeneration, resurrection, of the old one. Resurrection means, not something created out of nothing, but the restoration or rising again of that which has been laid down. A regenerated man is not another man, but the same man under the inspiration of new motives, sustained by new and nobler impulses — actuated by a brighter, even a heavenly, hope. Peter was the same man when he wrote these two Epistles, long after the day of Pentecost, that he was when he denied his Master, sank upon the waves that would not sustain him, and rashly smote off the ear of one of the crowd gathered around our Lord. It was the same Peter; there was the same original idiosyncrasy, — the same mind, temperament, person, — but regenerated, renewed. And so the earth will be

the same earth when it is re-constructed ; not another heaven and another earth, but a new heaven and a new earth. Heaven, if it means a place for the blessed, far away in the depths of nature, is irreconcilable with the promise that there is to be a *new* heaven. It needs no change. Such a promise implies that the old earth will be made new ; which is change of character, not annihilation ; re-construction of the earth, not its utter expulsion or extinction from its orbit ; the earth made new, not superseded by another. It is thus, then, that we argue that the new heaven and the new earth is to be the regeneration — *παλιγγενεσία* — of the earth that now is.

The late Dr. Chalmers, who was not generally understood to be attached to prophetic views, although more so in his latter days, thus gives his opinion on this subject. He says, “ It altogether holds out a more lively aspect of the elysium that awaits us, when told that there shall be beauty to delight the eye, and music to attract the ear, and the comfort that springs from all the charities of intercourse between man and man, holding converse as they do on earth, and gladdening each other with the benignant smiles that play upon the human countenance, or the accents of gladness. There is much of the innocent, much of the inspiring and much to affect and elevate the heart, in the scenes and conditions of materialism, and in the predictions of that text that, after the dissolution of its present frame-work, the earth will then be made and adapted to new creatures in all the graces of its first formation ; and that, in addition to our direct and personal view of the Deity, when he comes down to tabernacle with men we shall also have the reflection of him in a lovely mirror of his own workmanship ; and that, instead of being transported to a state of dimness and mystery, so remote from human experience as to be beyond all comprehension, we shall forever dwell in a place replenished

with those sensible delights and sensible glories which, we doubt not, will be most profusely scattered over a new heaven and new earth. But, though a paradise of sense, it will not be a paradise of sensuality.

“It is not the entire substitution of spirit for matter, . . . but it will be the entire substitution of holiness for sin. It is this which differences the Christian from the Mahometan paradise;—not that sense, and substance, and splendid imagery, are absent; but that all that is evil in principle, or voluptuous in impurity, will be utterly excluded from it. There will be a firm earth as we have at present; and a heaven stretched over it as we have at present; and it is not by the absence of these, but by the absence of sin, that the abodes of immortality will be characterized.” “These will be days of love and universal peace, when the very animals shall cease to devour each other.” “Can this be, that in the millennium there will be no death? Surely they who partake in the first resurrection will not die over again!”

Many other passages might be quoted from the writings of Dr. Chalmers, which plainly prove he was latterly what is called a millenarian.

Thus this great and eloquent interpreter of Scripture, who did not altogether coincide with many modern prophetic expositors, yet believed that this very earth will be the scene of joy and felicity for the saints, with all the materialism that sense sees in the present, but without the sensualities that sin creates and impresses on our present experience.

It is also a very remarkable fact, and well worthy of our consideration, that the last and most conclusive discoveries of geology all point in the very same direction. I have lately read a work on this subject, possessed of great practical research, pervaded by real eloquence, and, what is better, real religion. I regard it as a noble contribution to science. It is called “Footprints of the Creator,” written by Mr. Miller,

of Edinburgh, mainly to meet the sophistical conclusions of that unsound work, "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation." The demonstrations that he gives of the probability of a new heaven and a new earth are something very remarkable; and the coincidences he traces between facts and phenomena in science and truths in Scripture are more so. The close of that very interesting work is in the following terms:

"It is truly wonderful how thoroughly, in its general scope, the revealed" — that is, the Bible — "pieces on to the geologic record. We know, as geologists, that the dynasty of the fish was succeeded by that of the reptile;" — that is, that the creation of the one was an act which succeeded that of the other; — "that the dynasty of the reptile was succeeded by that of the mammiferous quadruped; and that the mammiferous quadruped was succeeded by that of man, as man now exists, — a creature of mixed character, and subject, in all conditions, to wide alternations of enjoyment and suffering. We know, further, — so far, at least, as we have yet succeeded in deciphering the record of geology, — that the several dynasties were introduced, not in their lower, but in their higher forms; that, in short, in the imposing programme of creation, it was arranged, as a general rule, that in each of the great divisions of the procession the magnates should walk first." It is well known the argument of the "Vestiges" was, that the lowest animal was made first; that gradually it developed itself into a higher, till, at last, it developed itself into a man. This is the book that made a great noise, and a great many converts. Mr. Miller has proved that the very reverse is the fact. Each creature was made in its highest perfection first, and then there took place a descent. Each dynasty came into the world perfect; then there was a deterioration; and, from the first created to the

last created, this descent of dynasty and of character has been universal. Then he adds :

“ We recognize yet further the fact of degradation specially exemplified in the fish and the reptile. And then, passing on to the revealed record, we learn that the dynasty of man in the mixed state and character is not the final one ; but that there is to be yet another creation, or, more properly, *re-creation*, known theologically as the resurrection, which shall be connected, in its physical components, by bonds of mysterious paternity, with the dynasty which now reigns, and be bound to it mentally by the chain of identity, conscious and actual ; but which, in all that constitutes superiority, shall be as vastly its superior as the dynasty of responsible man is superior to even the lowest of the preliminary dynasties. We are further taught that, at the commencement of this last of the dynasties, there will be a re-creation of not only elevated but also of degraded beings, — a re-creation of the *lost*. We are taught, yet further, that, though the present dynasty be that of a lapsed race, which at their first introduction were placed on higher ground than that on which they now stand, and sank by their own act, it was yet part of the original design, from the beginning of all things, that they should occupy the existing platform ; and that redemption is thus no after-thought, rendered necessary by the fall ; but, on the contrary, part of a general scheme, from which provision had been made from the beginning ; so that the Divine Man, through whom the work of restoration has been effected, was, in reality, in reference to the purposes of the Eternal, what he is designated in the remarkable text — “ *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* ” Slain from the foundation of the world ! Could the assertors of the stony science ask for language more express ? ” How strange that what are called the highest conclusions of Calvinism are in perfect analogy with the last conclusions of geological science !

“By piecing the two records together, — that revealed in Scripture and that revealed in the rocks, — records which, however widely geologists may mistake the one, or commentators misunderstand the other, have emanated from the same great Author, — we learn that in slow and solemn majesty has period succeeded period, each in succession ushering in a higher and yet higher scene of existence; — that fish, reptiles, mammiferous quadrupeds, have reigned in turn; that responsible man, ‘made in the image of God,’ and with dominion over all creatures, ultimately entered into a world ripened for his reception; but, further, that this passing scene in which he forms the prominent figure, is not the final one in the long series, but merely the last of the *preliminary* scenes; and that that period to which the bygone ages, incalculable in amount, with all their well-proportioned gradations of being, form the imposing vestibule, shall have perfection for its occupant and eternity for its duration. I know not how it may appear to others, but, for my own part, I cannot avoid thinking that there would be a lack of proportion in the series of being, were the period of perfect and glorified humanity abruptly connected, without the introduction of an intermediate creation of *responsible* imperfection, with that of the dying irresponsible brute. That scene of things in which God became man, and suffered, *seems*, as it no doubt *is*, a necessary link in the chain. So far as both the geologic and the scriptural evidence extends, no species or family of existence seems to have been introduced by creation into the present scene of being since the appearance of man. In Scripture, the formation of the human race is described as the terminal act of a series — ‘good’ in all its previous stages, but which became ‘very good’ then; and geologists, judging from the modicum of evidence which they have hitherto succeeded in collecting on the subject, — evidence

still meagre, but, so far as it goes, independent and distinct, — pronounce ‘post-Adamic creations’ at least ‘improbable.’

“The naturalist finds certain animal and vegetable species restricted to certain circles, and that in certain foci in these circles they attain to their fullest development and their maximum number. And these foci he regards as the original centres of creation, whence, in each instance, in the process of increase and multiplication, the plant or creature propagated itself outwards in circular wavelets of life, that sank at each stage as they widened, till, at length, at the circumference of the area, they wholly ceased. Now, we find it argued by Professor Edward Forbes, that ‘since man’s appearance certain geological areas, both of land and water, have been formed, presenting such physical conditions as to entitle us to expect within their bounds one, or in some instances more than one, centre of creation, or *point of maximum of a zoological or botanical province*. But a critical examination renders evident,’ the professor adds, ‘that, instead of showing distinct foci of creation, they have been in all instances peopled by colonization, that is, by migration of species from preëxisting and in every case pre-Adamic provinces. Among the terrestrial areas, the British isles may serve as an example; among marine, the Baltic, Mediterranean, and Black Seas. The British islands have been colonized from various centres of creation in (now) continental Europe; the Baltic Sea from the Celtic region, although it runs itself into the conditions of the Boreal one; and the Mediterranean, as it now appears, from the fauna and flora of the more ancient Lusitanian province.’ Professor Forbes, it is stated further in the report of his paper, to which I owe these details, — a paper read at the Royal Institution in March last, — ‘exhibited, in support of the same view, a map, showing the relation which the centres of creation of the air-breathing molluscs in Europe bear to the geological

history of the respective areas, and proving that the whole snail population of its northern and central extent (the portion of the continent of newest and probably post-Adamic origin), had been derived from foci of creation seated in pre-Adamic lands, And these remarkable facts have induced the professor,' it was added, 'to maintain the improbability of post-Adamic creations.' With the introduction of man into the scene of existence, creation, I repeat, seems to have ceased.

"What is it that now takes place, and performs its work? During the previous dynasties, all elevation in the scale was an effect simply of creation. Nature lay dead in a waste theatre of rock, vapor and sea, in which the insensate laws, chemical, mechanical and electric, carried on their blind, unintelligent processes. The *creative fiat* went forth; and, amid waters that straightway teemed with life in its lower forms, vegetable and animal, the dynasty of the fish was introduced. Many ages passed, during which there took place no further elevation. On the contrary, in not a few of the newly-introduced species of the reigning class there occurred, for the first time, examples of an asymmetrical misplacement of parts, and in at least one family of fishes instances of defect of parts; there was the manifestation of a downward tendency towards the degradation of monstrosity: when the elevatory fiat again went forth, and, *through an act of creation*, the dynasty of the reptile began. Again many ages passed by, marked, apparently, by the introduction of a warm-blooded, oviparous animal, the bird, and of a few marsupial quadrupeds; but in which the prevailing class reigned undeposed, though at least unelevated. Yet again, however, the elevatory fiat went forth, and, *through an act of creation*, the dynasty of the mammiferous quadruped began. And, after the further lapse of ages, the elevatory fiat went forth yet once more *in an act of creation*; and with the human, heaven-

inspiring dynasty, the moral government of God, in its connection with at least the world which we inhabit, 'took beginning.' And then creation ceased. Why? Simply because God's moral government had begun; because, in necessary conformity with the institution of that government, there was to be a thorough identity maintained between the glorified and immortal beings of the terminal dynasty, and the dying magnates of the dynasty which now is; and because, in consequence of the maintenance of this identity as an essential condition of this moral government, mere *acts of creation* could no longer carry on the elevatory process. The work, analogous in its end and object to those *acts of creation* which gave to our planet its successive dynasties of higher and yet higher existences, is the work of *redemption*. It is the elevatory process of the present time — the only possible provision for that final act of *re-creation* 'to everlasting life' which shall usher in the terminal dynasty."

And then he goes on to argue that the six days of creation were, as is in all probability true, six protracted periods; that the seventh day, on which God rested, is the dispensation in which we now live. It is a very remarkable thought, but one, I think, wonderfully sustained by Scripture, that the Sabbath on which God rested has now existed since the creation; and that the six days that preceded it may each day have been as long as the six thousand years that have now elapsed since the creation; and then, that the present Sabbath, of which every seventh day is a divine epitome, is but a type of the last Sabbath of this dispensation — that Sabbath on which will appear complete that "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

I do not adopt his views on this interesting topic. They demand inquiry. I merely state his facts as proofs that the conclusions of science and the declarations of Scripture piece together, so that every day more clearly reveals geology

ascending up from its subterranean depths, and pronouncing, in the highest maturity of its researches, "Thy word, O God, is truth."

I can see no reason to conclude, either in the analogies of things, or from the page of Scripture, that the earth on which we now live shall ever be utterly annihilated. In the absence of disproof, it seems to me far more beautiful — not less scriptural — that Calvary, Gethsemane and Olivet, should remain visible forever, as the shrines of grand recollections; that the air which Jesus breathed should be purified, not annihilated; that the streams in which he was baptized, and of which he drank, should flow forever only in primeval purity: that the tongue which he spoke should forever be spoken by the redeemed; that the earth on which he trod should still exist; and therefore that a great process, not of destruction, but of purification, should pass upon the heavens and the earth, that there may be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." In the absence of Scripture declaration to that effect, one cannot see any necessity for the annihilation of this earth. Why should we desire to see annihilated what God made? It was once good; why may it not be so again? What made it bad? Sin. The expulsion of the contaminating evil will leave it what it once was — perfectly good. We form some idea of Nineveh by its gigantic remains. We have some conception of what Palmyra was, by its broken columns and surviving magnificence. And though the robber lurks still beneath their dismantled roofs, and the hyena and the wolf find a lair on the sites of their palaces, yet we can conceive what they were. And we can conceive, in like manner, what this earth once was, and what this earth will yet be, by the scattered vestiges of departed splendor, and imagine perfections that are still traceable on every acre, too great to be altogether effaced. Jesus came not to destroy the works of God, but the works of the devil; to dis-

tinguish, divide and purify — not to annihilate. We can positively hear this, in the words of Peter, the divine promise, that there shall be “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Let sin be expelled from the earth, and the fever that now racks it will be laid, the stain that now contaminates and defiles it will be removed. That bright mirror, broken into a thousand fragments, scattered over every land, shall be recast, and again reflect the glory of him that made it, with more responsive accuracy than at the first. That glorious temple, shattered by sin, its walls dilapidated, its glory quenched or darkened, shall be reconstructed, and resound through every chamber with the praises of him that redeemed it. Then, all space shall be the temple of Deity; all days shall be hallowed; all sounds shall be praise; time shall be a perpetual Sabbath, and every action of ours ceaseless worship; the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, and all shall know him, from the least even unto the greatest. Now, it is written; then, it will be actualized. Now, we believe the promise, and are cheered by the prospect of it; then, we shall enter the new heavens and the new earth, and be refreshed and delighted by the possession of it. At that day, the earth shall be a Gerizim, a mount of blessing, from which nothing but benedictions shall perpetually pour down, as the oil from the head to the skirts of Aaron; and the earth, having shared in the sorrows and the sufferings of those who fell when sin was introduced into it, shall, like the nurse of a royal child, be raised to share in the dignities of him who is enthroned priest and king, and crowned Lord of all.

But while this is to be the physical aspect of the earth, its moral aspect, as Dr. Chalmers has stated, is, after all, the great distinguishing thing. It will be a “new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Sin shall be expelled from every quarter of it; righteousness shall pene-

trate it like an all-pervading perfume, inseparable from it for ever and ever. Evil shall flee like a shadow from the presence of that righteous one. It shall be utterly cast out from that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

There will be no sorrow. The tears of widows shall not be seen. The cries of orphans shall not be heard. The groans of the earth, travailing in pain, seeking to be delivered, shall cease; and the very springs and component elements of sorrow shall be utterly dried up. The language of the promise to which I have previously referred, is far more intense than it seems in our translation, — “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” It is strictly, “God shall wipe out all tears from their eyes.” The Hebrew word translated eye also means a fountain; and so, when it is said “God shall wipe out all tears from their eyes,” it conveys the idea that he shall extinguish the very fountain of tears. Weeping, except from excess of joy, if there be such an exception, will be impossible; the very possibility of tears shall perish with the cause of them.

Because there will be nothing but righteousness, and no more sin, there shall therefore be no more curse. What blights the flowers? what awakens the winds and tempests? what sends the frost that nips the infant buds? what rouses the sleeping earthquake? what launches the destructive lightning? what causes the brutes to dread man’s presence and dispute man’s sovereignty? what raised all nature in rebellion against man, when men rose in rebellion against God? Sin; and the curse is its rebound. Sin once expunged from the face of nature, and the righteous one introduced, as the true Shechinah, the curse under which we now groan shall cease, and all things resume their aboriginal perfection.

There will be no more ignorance. They shall no more teach every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord.

Bibles will scarcely be necessary ; because all the Bible says will be recollected by every memory, and inscribed on every heart. Ministers will be wholly unnecessary ; for they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know him, from the very least to the greatest. There shall be no unconverted masses ; no more an unenlightened, and therefore a dangerous population ; but all shall know the truth, and, knowing the truth, shall be made truly free, and therefore live as the peaceful inhabitants of a country wherein dwelleth righteousness. They shall be all righteous. There shall be no Papal invasions in a land where Protestant — that is, scriptural — truth reigns in its undisputed supremacy ; no intrusion possible on the prerogative of the King of kings, the Prince of the kings of the earth. Babylon shall be destroyed, and its smoke shall ascend forever ; and the Moslem crescent shall have waned, never more to rise or shine upon a world of sorrow, of darkness and of suffering. Righteousness is now a visitant of earth ; then, it shall have an unending hospitality. Happiness, the offspring of righteousness, is now only here and there a sojourner ; then it shall be a dweller on the earth forever. There it shall find its home ; there they shall all be righteous, and nothing that defileth shall be permitted there.

Such will be that new heaven and new earth, the picture of which is so beautifully delineated in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the book of the Revelation.

When that day dawns, and the predicted new heaven and new earth arrive, then the saints that sleep shall awake, and the saints that are alive shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The bride shall be made ready for the bridegroom, and the new Jerusalem shall come down from heaven, and we shall enter into a scene of joy, of blessedness, and of peace, such as poet's fancy has never, in its happiest imaginings, dreamed ; such as eye has not seen, and such as ear has not

heard, and such as it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

But, if righteousness be the main characteristic of the place, let it never be forgotten, righteousness must be the grand characteristic of the people; and, therefore, the most exact picture of that coming age will be nothing but sorrow to him who has not the franchise that is his only title to an entrance, or the character that is the only qualification for his admission. It is a righteous place for a righteous people; it is a prepared place for a prepared people. There must be a harmony between the place and those who are to inhabit it. Were I carried to Jupiter, or Saturn, or any of the other planets, I could not live there. My physical organization would disqualify me, Were an unsanctified person carried into this new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, he could not be happy there. It lies deep in the very nature of things, "Ye must be born again." Except a man be thus born again, he cannot see the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. No ecclesiastical baptism can qualify us for it. No ecclesiastical connection can be a title to it. Church and dissent are in this respect shadows, that will be lost in that day. Holiness of heart, regeneration of nature, alone is a valid qualification for it. Let me ask the reader, whoever he may be, known or unknown to the writer, great or mean, learned or untaught, Are you born again? Do you feel towards God suspicion, dread and shrinking? This is a very questionable state. Towards Jesus Christ are your feelings those of trust, of confidence, of peace? or the reverse? Does the Bible appear to you more and more worthy of admiration and delight? Is it the man of your counsel, the book of your study? your sweetest recollection by night, your enthusiastic study by day? Do you listen to it as if it reflected the very tones of the voice of Jesus? Do you study it as if it were the very superscription and image

of Jesus? Do you look forward to each new year as it comes round, in the light of this book? Do you feel that you are *on* the current of years, and not standing *by* it? There is many a popular misapprehension about this. Numbers think that they are on the bank of the river of time, and that the river is rushing by, while they are standing still. They are much mistaken. We are all moving with it; not a few are on that very part of the flood where it must soon disembody either in everlasting misery or in everlasting felicity and joy. Let us consecrate the hour, as it rushes past, to high and holy purposes. Let us pray, too, and labor (and I use these words with a deep sense and recollection that we are saved by grace) more heartily, as we advance nearer eternity, that each successive year may carry us nearer to the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God, the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Live in daily practical expectation of this blessed rest that remains for the people of God. The exile thinks of his country; the traveller anticipates his home; the miser ponders over his wealth. Let the law of Christian hope hear wonderful melodies from above; let the eye of hope see the land that is afar off; let the heart of hope anticipate that "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Let us also, if we are looking for this "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," teach our children to anticipate it. In our families, in our schools, let us educate not alone, not mainly, for the earth that now is, but for the earth that is to be. Let us regard our children and pupils as having souls that are destined to live forever, and to occupy their place either in everlasting joy or amid everlasting sorrow. Teach them this truth. Raise these spring plants from creeping on the earth, and train them to twine round and grow up the tree of life that is amidst the Paradise of God, as parasite plants, nourished, and directed, and sustained, till they bloom

in the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." What shall it profit, if we prepare our children for playing a distinguished and successful part in the world, if we leave them behind us hopeless exiles from that better land? What will it advantage them if they are taught the sublimest music, if we have never taught them to sing the new song? What will it avail in that day if they are allied in marriage to the noblest of the land, if not married as the bride to the bridegroom, Jesus Christ? It will profit nothing if they know all the countries of the world, with all their calamities, their characteristics, and their checkered history, if they neither know nor anticipate that blessed and glorious rest which awaiteth the people of God. Let us begin now, at this very moment, to seek living religion; the first thing in our homes, first in our schools, first in our trades, first in all places where God in his providence has ordered us, even the kingdom of God and his righteousness, hoping and believing that all other things will be added unto us.

We are about to enter on new and startling phases of the history of mankind, and in these nothing short of real, living religion will do. Not ancient though decent habit, not form, not ceremony, not a name, will avail at that day. When the last trumpet shall startle the sleeping dead, and the last fire shall wrap heaven and earth, they, and only they, that are the doers of Christ's will, shall be admitted into the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Not building beautiful churches, with tapering spires that stretch into the sky, is Christianity. Not gathering and arranging flowers upon the altar, or decking the pillars of the church or the windows of our shops with evergreens at Christmas, is Christianity. Does the hammer of the word break each hard heart? Does the fire of God's truth consume every evil appetite? Does the sword of God's word cut off the right hand and the right eye? Have we admitted the great God into the

living temple that he built? and does he there cast out the lusts, the appetites, the passions, the money-changers, and them that sell doves? Has he re-consecrated that dilapidated temple to be the house of prayer, the home of our Father, the throne of the Holy Spirit? Not husks, not withered stalks, not name, profession and pretence, but the pith and core of living, vital, evangelical religion, will fit us for one of those many mansions which Christ has gone to prepare. Let us anticipate that rest, make ready for it, and pray that our hearts may be renewed in the prospect of. In the trials of life let this bright hope gladden us. In the afflictions of life let it sustain us. In the bitter sorrows of life let it comfort us. Our hearts' affections find their rest and nutriment not here. We must not care for the rough road that has so blessed an end, or the stormy sea that carries us to so bright and peaceful a haven. Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace."

Soon the old years of weary time shall be gathered to their grave, and that new and joyous year, long promised and still sure, shall leap into this world, — not, as it now is, convulsed with rocking thrones, unsceptred kings, institutions that tilt and totter to their fall, trade paralyzed, agriculture in anxiety, all men's hearts fearing for the things that are coming upon the earth. A millennial sun will soon dawn upon our world, the first beam of which will disclose a world "wherein dwelleth righteousness." At all events, if we cannot create it, let us pray for it. If we cannot urge it on one day, let us at least do what we can to make the world that we are now in better for our passing through it. One stone laid upon the earth is better than twenty castles built in the air. One solid, practical, honest act of beneficence, charity, hope and faith, done now, is evidence of a heart right before God, and is a greater contribution to what will be than all the pictures I

can sketch, or your imagination portray. Are we new creatures? have we new hearts? are we Christians? is God all in all in our everything? Are we able to say now, "I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him, against that day wherein the heavens shall be on fire, and the earth and the things that are therein shall be burned up, in which we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"?

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT BENEDICTION.

“ Such words have power to quell
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

“ Thus the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that conceal the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.”

“ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” — MATTHEW 25 : 34.

MANY difficulties have occurred to every interpreter of the passage prefixed to this chapter. There is what is called the prophetic view, about which all interpreters are not agreed ; and there is what is called the popular and the common view, usually accepted, and generally proclaimed from the pulpit. Perhaps there is truth in both ; certainly there are difficulties about the exclusive reception of either. For instance, if this be a description of the last assize, the final judgment of all men, good and bad, from the commencement of the world to its close, this difficulty occurs : first, how is it possible that any of God's people can be unconscious, at that day, that they have clothed the naked, given bread to the hungry, visited the sick, and ministered to them in prison ? or how can they be unconscious that, inasmuch as they did it unto these, they did it unto Christ ? Surely every one cannot have for-

gotten the text, that the cup of cold water given to a believer, in Christ's name, does not go without its reward. Many, reading these words, are conscious that they have done some of these things, though not to the extent they ought to have done, in Christ's name, and for Christ's glory, and to these people as Christ's people. Then, if all are present at this assize, how can none be conscious that they have done it in Christ's name to Christ's people? We feel this difficulty.

Again, if all are assembled together here, as at the last assize, and if these be the words that describe it, there occurs another difficulty in the fortieth verse, where Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Who are "these my brethren"? There are two classes mentioned here; but what is that class extrinsical and independent of both—"these my brethren"? Thus there are difficulties about the interpretation popularly accepted. And these difficulties, perhaps, are not altogether got rid of by an interpretation that is not without its difficulties, but which, in my judgment, has more to commend itself to us than that which I have now described.

Let us study the passage. We must not take a portion of Scripture for a peg to hang something of one's own upon, but as the basis of faith and hope, and for the exposition of a great truth, whilst we make a humble, and we pray that it may be a successful endeavor to become more acquainted with what the Spirit says expressly. This should be our study. It is obvious that the twenty-fourth chapter describes the coming of the Son of man. For instance, at the thirtieth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they

shall gather together his elect :” the dead in Christ shall rise first; the living in Christ shall meet him in the air; “they shall gather together his elect.” This is that first resurrection, the resurrection from among the dead. Then, what do we find shall be the description of this day? In the thirty-eighth verse, it is said, “As in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch, therefore :” “Therefore, be ye also ready.” Now mark how the twenty-fifth chapter begins: “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” Would it not seem that the two grand parables which are thus unfolded in the twenty-fifth chapter contain, if I may be allowed the expression, different scenes in the same great drama? that this twenty-fifth chapter, which takes place at the time that is specified in the twenty-fourth, enunciates various scenes of this great drama, if not temporarily, or chronologically successive, at least different views or aspects of the same event? This twenty-fifth chapter apparently contains successive chronological acts or scenes which follow each other at that day, — for the day of judgment may be one thousand years, or a thousand months, or weeks, or hours.

But, if we cannot admit that this twenty-fifth chapter gives chronological scenes, it may be designed to give different views or varied aspects of the same grand event. Let us look at it. In the first section, in the first twelve verses, we have the parable of the ten virgins. Prophetic interpreters seem to think that these describe what shall be the state of that generation of the visible church existent at Christ’s coming. It seems to me highly probable that this describes the spirit-

ual condition of the existing churches when Christ comes upon them, — five wise, five foolish, five saints, five unbelievers, — I do not mean numerically, for it may not be intended to state how many shall be saved; but substantially the grand division. Let us also mark the next parable, — the parable of the talents. It describes the five talents making ten, and the possessor made ruler over five cities; and two talents making four, and their possessor also entering into the joy of the Lord; and the last person hiding his talent in the earth, and turning it to no account; and then the sentence upon him, “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This is supposed by many to describe the general judgment upon universal Christendom. The baptized and believers both — that is, all professing Christendom — are summoned to Christ’s presence, and each is dealt with according to the use that he has made of his talent, whatever that talent was. Then, the opinion — though I admit this last has difficulties — of most of the prophetic interpreters is, that this last scene of all describes the judgment on the heathen alone; and so far one can see that the difficulties which met us in the other view do not occur in this. If this be correct, it delineates the heathen unconsciously ministering to Christ’s people through some straggling ray or influence of divine truth or grace, that may have been in sovereignty applied to their hearts; for I dare not say, because the Bible does not authorize it, that all the heathen shall be lost. Many an Ethiopian from the depths of Africa, many a savage from the South Seas, may have a place at Christ’s right hand, when many a loud professor hears the withering accents, “Depart from me; I know you not.” This description may be more probably that of the heathen, because it seems to contemplate a class unconscious of having ministered to Christ. It seems, I repeat, to contemplate a class wholly unconscious of having served

Christ; surprised at finding that the little ministry of a cup of cold water to a missionary in the midst of them was a ministry to Christ; — unaware that the voice that pleaded in the war-council for a Christian's life, when other savages were determined to destroy him, was a testimony for Christ. I submit both these views. Certainly we may learn this lesson, that there is a good deal more in Scripture than we have yet discovered; that there are depths, and heights, and glories, and ideas, and allusions, and facts, — ay, and doctrines, that will come out of this wondrous book, — this blessed epitome of all that is true, and bright, and happy, — as the years rush by, and, as the Spirit descends upon our hearts, and fulfils that promise, "Many shall run to and fro, and the knowledge of things now hidden shall be increased," such as we have not yet dreamed of.

I have so far laid down the various views entertained of the passage, and also stated its difficulties. Let us study it. and pray over it too; and, the more we learn, the more we shall discover how little we have yet learned.

Let us look at it, however, in a practical light; a light that cannot be incompatible with any of those interpretations that I have here quoted. If it be only one view of the closing scenes of the Christian church, and not one of a series, with chronological succession, — in short, another phase of the last assize, not a distinct assize, — then what I am about to state cannot be inapplicable. If the people of God are here referred to as the parties present and described, then all I now adduce is as applicable to their case as it is instructive to us.

We have here, then, the certainty of this event, — it is sure, it must be. "When the Son of man shall sit upon his throne," then shall all that is recorded in this chapter of Matthew take place. The words are not, "If the Son of man shall sit upon his throne:" but, "When the Son of man

shall sit upon the throne of his glory." Then a last day will come, a close to this age will arrive. There will not only be the last Sabbath of a last year, but there will be the last day of the world, now rapidly and with an accelerated speed rushing to the judgment-seat of Christ. On the last day, these last words will be addressed to many: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Whether we be of this church or of that church, of this nation or of that nation, if we be the blessed of the Father, chosen in Christ, washed in his blood, accepted through his righteousness, this grand invitation will be addressed to us.

What a startling change will some see when Christ comes, and sits with his holy angels upon the throne of his glory! Is this he, they will ask, whom we saw standing upon the mount, and heard preaching its grand sermon? Is this he, the Pharisee will ask, that sat at my table? Is this he whom I saw sleeping in the vessel, rocked by the sea-surge, and apparently at the mercy of the wind and wave, just like one of us? Is this he that sat by Jacob's well, and told me all things, and made me conclude, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world"? Is this he, seated on the throne, from whose presence heaven and earth flee away or hide themselves, unable to gaze upon the intense glory? Is this the crucified, now the glorified? Is this the Man of Sorrows apparently, the mighty God, the Prince of peace, the Creator of heaven and earth? It is so; it must be so; it is fixed that the Son of man shall come, and, with his angels, shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered *παντα τα εθνη*, all the Gentiles, as it might be translated, or all the heathen; and this rendering would favor the last prophetic interpretation to which I have referred.

But let us mark another and delightful feature. He receives to his bosom first his own, before he pronounces that awful sentence upon those that are not his. He receives

his own to the place of safety before he denounces the sentence that dismisses the unbelieving and the lost to everlasting misery.

It is here, too, worthy of notice, that only two classes are mentioned throughout the whole paragraph :— they that are saved and they that are lost, whether with many or few talents ; they that were wise and they that were foolish ; they that were shut out and they that were admitted ; they that were cast into the fire and punished, and they that entered into the glory of the Lord ; they that inherited the kingdom, and they that were cast out into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. There is no ground for the belief of a purgatory — of an intermediate place, a third class. There are but two great divisions, the lost and the saved. There are but two final issues, — the destiny of the blessed, the doom of the cursed. There is no spot where the unjustified shall be justified between time and eternity, between “now” and the judgment-seat. We are justified, and admitted at once into heaven, and numbered with the saved ; or we are not justified, and sink into our native doom, and are numbered with the eternally lost. There are but two classes. Let us never forget this. All circumstance, all national, denominational, sectarian distinctions between rank and rank, between caste and caste, are lost, and merged in the splendor or the darkness of one of two great characters. The very intensity of that light puts out all distinctions but those that shall last forever — the distinction between the saved in Christ and the lost that are aliens to Christ. Spiritual and moral character survives the grave, emerges into the light of the last day ; nothing else does. Royalty never comes out of the tomb into which it enters. Wealth, fame, renown, heroism, lie forever in the grave into which they were gathered. But what grace has made us, or what sin has left us, will rise with us, and appear at Christ’s throne, and be recognized by him as ineffaceable, inexhaust-

ible distinctions, carrying each in its bosom its reward, or its hopeless and its irretrievable curse.

Jesus is the judge. Christ shall sit upon his throne; Christ shall pronounce the sentence; Christ shall summon all to that throne. If there be a place where Deity must be, surely it is the judgment-throne. If there be any spot in the wide universe, if there be any fact or point of time in the past, present, or the future, where all the attributes of the Deity are needed, and where none but Deity can discharge the sublime functions that are there required, surely that place is a judgment-seat. If God be not there, where is he? I could suppose, however difficult the supposition, God absent from the creation of the world; but I cannot for a moment suppose that God can be absent from the judgment of the world. Show me, therefore, that Jesus is to have all gathered before him; that he is to see the thoughts of every heart; to estimate all the feelings of my heart, all the thoughts of my imagination, all the hopes, the fears, and feelings, that fluttered within my soul, all the sins that stained it; — grant me that this is Jesus of Nazareth, and there is an end, in my judgment, of Socinianism. Christ is God, and as God we fear and worship him, and from him as God we expect a sentence that will fix our everlasting state.

How remarkable it is the love of souls still shines forth in Jesus, even on the judgment-seat! How exquisitely beautiful is the trait here disclosed! He does not tell them what he has done for them; but he tells them, in congratulatory accents, yet all consistent with grace, what they have done for him. How condescending, how beautiful is it, that the very features that he has himself implanted he there and then recognizes! What is but a borrowed lustre of his own bright image, Jesus gives credit for, if the reader will allow such an expression — an expression capable of misconstruction, but yet not meant so — “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was

thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was in prison, and ye came to me." Beautiful fact ! Blessed Saviour ! who recognizest in me, dim, marred, mutilated, distorted as they are, some of the bright reflections of thine own blessed image, some of the holy traits which thine own holy hand has transferred !

But, more than this, we must notice that, when he thus recognizes what they had done, they, by the language in which they reply, do not recognize any merit whatever in what they did. They do not say, "Well, so it is, and therefore we ask of thee to be admitted into heaven ;" but, wondering that he should see excellency where they saw only alloy, — wondering that he should see beauty where they saw the intermingling of all that tarnished and defiled, — they ask, not in simulated but real amazement, "Lord, when saw we thee hungry ? When saw we thee naked ? We have nothing that we trusted in and gloried in. We come to thee on this ground, and on no other, that there is a kingdom prepared for us by everlasting love, and out of sovereign grace, from the foundation of the world."

Let us also meditate on the place to which believers are here gathered. They shall be gathered — Christ's redeemed ones, for such they are, and their works do follow — to the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, — the place of honor, of dignity, and of rank. The instant that the trumpet shall sound — and it shall sound when we least expect it — the dead body of every saint shall start from its sleeping-place, and fling off its shroud, and undergo, as it casts it away, a transition from this mortal to that immortal, from this corruptible to that incorruptible, death being swallowed up in victory ; and shall take its place amid the splendors that play around the throne of glory. The sound of that last trumpet shall penetrate the hearts and homes of the believing ; and, at its royal summons, each true Christian, wherever found, and whatever name he bears, and however obscured or misrepre-

sented, shall instantly feel, rushing through every limb, a mysterious virtue, that shall change in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, this mortal into immortal, this corruptible into incorruptible; and each, reënimated and restored, shall rise in obedience to a mysterious attraction, until he reach the right hand of the Son of God, and there, amid inconceivable glory, be manifested personally, and proclaimed as his before an assembled world.

Let us notice, in this passage, the words of benediction that Christ speaks to them. They are "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is the old sound that we have heard sounding in our ears for so many years. What have so many ministers been saying, what has Christ been saying, but this very word, "come"? This is the olden and ever fresh and ever beautiful sound we have heard in the chimes of our Sabbath bells. This is the very voice that has never been hushed, but has been ever reflected in multiplied echoes from the baptismal font and from the communion table, in the house of prayer and in the school-room. This is the very word that we have heard so long from so many pulpits. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst come;" — "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." It was then, however, "Come, ye sad;" it is now, "Come, ye rejoicing." It was then, "Come, ye poor;" it is now, "Come, ye who are rich in Christ." Then, "Come, ye out-door servants, serving me amid the winds, and the rains, and storms;" it is now, "Come, ye in-door servants, to serve me without ceasing in your Father's house." It was then, "Come, ye soldiers, with your weapons in your hands;" it is now, "Come, ye conquerors, with palms in your hands, and laurels around your brows." It was once, "Come to the cross;" it is now, "Come to the throne." It was once, "Come to my house;"

now it is, "Come to my kingdom." Once, "Come to the Lamb slain;" now, "Come to the Lamb seated on his throne with many crowns upon his head." It is now, "Come, ye mothers; meet again the babes you lost in infancy, and find that they were transplanted, not trampled flowers." "Come, ye who have lost the near and the dear, to rejoin them in a better than a Christmas gathering." Every reünion upon earth is often marred, is always broken, has seasons of sad thoughts as well as seasons of bright ones. And often, when the scene has appeared the brightest, — do not I appeal to the experience of all? — and when glad voices, and that most beautiful music of all, the glad voices of our children, fell upon our ears, have we not had even then presentiments of sorrow, and foreboding forms of trial, crossing our hearts like shadows, and reminding us that those bright voices must one day be silent, and those sparkling faces one day be flushed and fevered on a sick bed, — that this happy circle must one day be scattered, and this glad home hang out its escutcheon, to indicate that in the midst of life we are in death, and that one of its inmates has been taken away? But at that day it will be a reünion never to be severed. That grand voice will say, "Adam, come from your distant grave. Come, Abel, from your martyr's tomb. Come, Noah, from where the waves of the flood subsided. Come, Martin Luther, from the church of Wittenberg. Come, Knox, with all thy faults, from that tomb on which is written, 'Here lies a man that never feared the face of clay.' Come, ye noble army of martyrs, ye goodly fellowship of the prophets, ye glorious company of the apostles, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Come, all of all lands, who have washed your robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

And when that word "Come" is uttered, what a sound will it be! The trumpet of the archangel, the trump of

God, shall sound, and the air that we breathe will be its vehicle, and the earth below and the sky above will shake with its reverberations. Some night when we sleep sweetly, or some day when we are standing each man at his employment, this—I do not say terrible, but piercing—sound shall run through every house, and startle the silence of every grave; and from every point of the wide universe responsive echoes shall come rolling as the voice of many waters, and as the noise of great thunderings, and thousands emerging from the depths of the silent sea shall answer, “We come, we come!” Innumerable multitudes, rushing from the tombs and sepulchres, and the dens and the caves of the earth, and from beneath the sands of the desert, that have been the winding-sheet of so many way-worn travellers, shall answer, “We come, we come!” Voices, too, from Franklin and his gallant companions, probably buried in the bosom of the gigantic iceberg, shall answer then, as the ice splits asunder, and lets God’s anointed ones come out, “We come, we come!” From beneath the green turf in the village church-yards; from the marble tombstones beneath which coronets and mitres lie; from beneath the battle-sods of many hard-fought fields, men that fell fighting in the death-struggle shall rise rejoicing, in their resurrection robes, and answer, “We come, we come!” All that fell asleep in Jesus shall answer, “We come, we come!” and take their place at the right hand of Christ. On that day, whether in the first scene, the second scene, or the last scene, in one of them we, too, shall be and occupy a place.

This invitation of our Lord, “Come,” indicates that the future is simply a continuation of the present. Heaven is not a new state, that commences in a future age. Heaven—or happiness, for the words are synonymous—is the coronal merely of a character that has been generated on earth, and ripened under gracious influences. It has been well said,

“Heaven is not so much a place” — I mean, viewing it in its highest sense — “as a character.” Wherever a holy man is, there is happiness: place such a man in the depths of hell, and he cannot but be happy. Wherever there is an unregenerate and sinful man, he must be miserable; put him on the very loftiest pinnacle of heaven, and near the throne, and he will be no nearer happiness. Heaven begins in the individual bosom now, and expands into a heaven richer, but not another; and hell begins in the individual bosom, and grows in force, till it issues in the misery that will be. Future happiness is a continuation of the present character. It is just that centripetal attraction which draws here, and hereafter, only with less resistance, the believer nearer and nearer to Christ, the infinitely distant centre of attraction: and the nearer he approaches each day, the more he grows in happiness, each stage an augmentation of joy, each year yielding us richer blessedness forever. Our future state is the ceaseless continuation of that coming to God which commenced in the sanctuary, in this dispensation. Heaven is everlasting, ceaseless approaching to Christ — to God in Christ, the infinite centre — along radii that, coming from every point of the circumference, meet and mingle in that Divine Being. The nearer we approach the never-approached centre, the richer and wider the panorama of magnificence and glory we see, — the intenser the happiness that pours its tide along every artery of the soul, and cheers every avenue of the heart. Hence, when Christ says to a saint “Come,” he just says, “Continue your approximation to me; come with greater speed, and so with more increasing joy.” When he says to the lost “Depart,” he says, “Continue your retrogression or departure from me, your remorse augmenting as you retreat.” Heaven is cumulative; hell is cumulative also. The happiness of the one grows in intensity and greatness, ever expanding into new and ever-fragrant blos-

soms, ever filling our souls with ever-multiplying joys, as the days of eternity roll. So we fear it will be with the lost; their misery must be ever accumulating, because ever fed from ever-opening springs of bitterness.

Let us notice, in the next place, the character of those addressed, — “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” You may have been cursed of men; — cursed in the bulls of Popes; cursed in the anathemas of general councils; cursed from thrones, cathedrals, convocations; cursed by a thousand Baalaams, at the bidding of a thousand Balaks, from a thousand mountains in succession; — yet you have been blessed of God, and that clothing, woven of benedictions, like adamant has repelled every curse, or made it rebound and alight upon the head of him that flung it. “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” At your approach thorns have blossomed into rose-trees, briars into myrtle-trees, curses into blessings. The very desert has smiled as you trod it, and the wilderness has blossomed as the rose ever as you looked upon it. It is pure and holy character that would light up a millennium; it is not a millennium that could make a guilty character happy. Blessed are they, as the Saviour said on the Mount, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Blessed in suffering; blessed in spite of suffering; in whose suffering was nothing penal; in whose most painful experiences was everything paternal. “Blessed of my Father;” but often when you knew it not, — often in the shape of trials. When you cried out, in the anguish of your heart, “Show me the Father,” an apocalypse of the Father did come, but not in sunshine, as you expected, but in clouds; yet audible from the bosom of that cloud was your Father’s voice, and concealed in its bosom were a thousand blessings, that came to you disguised, not diluted, in the shape of crosses, sick beds, and sorrows, and sore bereavements; and that which you felt at the time to be the bitterest fact proved, in after

years, to have been a predestined and teeming blessing from the bosom of your Father. "Come, then, ye blessed of my Father." Blessed in sufferings, blessed in joys, — blessed in time, blessed in eternity, are ye. "Come, ye blessed."

He adds, "Inherit." Whether this chapter be a picture of the Gentile or of the Jew, of the believer or of the unbeliever, it reveals this one great fact, that heaven, or happiness, or the future glory, is all an inheritance. Now, what is an inheritance? Something that we cannot get by purchase; something that we cannot deserve by merit; it is a thing that we succeed to by relationship. That word, "inherit," disposes of all ideas of merit whatever. If the poor creature who is doing penance at the bidding of his priest, — who is trying by maceration of the flesh to expiate the sins of the soul, — who, by wearing sack-cloth or hair-cloth, fancies that thereby he is putting on a robe that will justify him in God's sight, — could only see that heaven is not given to penance-doers nor to penance-dealers, but to the sons of God by the adoption of grace, how rapidly would it extinguish all his vain efforts to obtain what is not bread, and raise him perhaps to the lofty hope of expecting heaven as the inheritance of a son, not as the purchase of a servant or a slave! There will not be one stone or acre in that happy rest that shall not reveal these words, "saved by grace." "By grace" shall shine from every gem that sparkles from every diadem that rests upon every head. "By grace" shall be the aroma of every flower, the weft, woof, and the warp of every robe, and the burden of every anthem; and the eternal song shall be "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and our Father, unto him be glory and honor." Our rights, our merits, would carry us direct to hell. Grace alone, in spite of our merits

and demerits, can carry us direct to the right hand of Christ. "The wages of sin is death; the gift of God is eternal life."

Inherit what? A kingdom; the dignity of kings, the sacredness of priests; the splendor of a kingdom without its cares; the grandeur of kings without the aching of royal heads; the dignity of crowns without the thorns that are in them here; and so order, not anarchy,—subordination, not independence,—are the ideas that are suggested to us by the very mention of the word "kingdom." This kingdom is described in language that may be read over and over again, in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Revelation, and be felt like the new song, ever new, and as the benediction that follows prayer, ever beautiful. It is an epitome of the imagery of the blessed, an oratorio of musical promises, a portrait gallery of calotypes of the promised land, painted by the rays of that Sun that ever gladdens it. When the kingdoms of this world shall have all passed away,—when their sceptres shall have disappeared, as the spangle falls and is forgotten from a royal robe,—when all that man prides himself upon is buried in the dust,—this kingdom, which has true, because lasting, dignity, shall emerge from the haze that now lies on it, in its pure and untainted glory.

But while it is a kingdom, yet, as if to do away with all idea of merit, and to deepen in our hearts the idea of sovereignty, it is a "kingdom prepared for you." Thus Christianity is not a recent thing; it is no accidental invention, no subsequent device for the reparation of evil; it has been the preparation of God from the foundation of the world. The last discourse that the Saviour pronounced contains these words, "I go to prepare a place for you." That hand that was nailed to the cross for me is now sowing that bright land with its budding glories; that Sun who veiled his greatness, and came to suffer for me, is now lighting up this coming kingdom for me with its everlasting light: he is preparing a

place for a prepared people. Hell was never prepared for any human being. The Bible says, in this very passage, it was "prepared for the devil and his angels;" but heaven is prepared for saints from the foundation of the world: where sin has abounded grace has much more abounded. If any man finds himself in heaven, his estimate of the reason of his introduction will be, I am here because I was redeemed by the atoning blood, and prepared by the sanctifying Spirit of Jesus for this prepared place. But if any man finds himself among the lost, his only discoverable reason will be, I am here in spite of the entreaties of God, in spite of the warnings of his word, in spite of the remonstrances of my conscience. I had to fight strongly before I ever got here, and now I am here a suicide, not slain. I came here. I was not driven here. It was never meant for me, and yet I have made it the only possible place in creation for me. Such recollections will be its stings, such feelings its bitter draughts, such sorrows its remorse. The inscription on heaven is, "By divine grace." The inscription on hell is, "By human merit." The one is the free gift of God; the other, the full price of our own doings. "The wages of sin is death: the gift of God is eternal life."

Prepared, then, we are told, this heaven is, "from the very foundation of the world." Then it was prepared, not by anything we have done, but entirely of God, and "prepared from the foundation of the world."

Come, then, reader, "unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, unto the heavenly Jerusalem, unto the innumerable company of the angels, unto God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Come to his cross; come to him with the crown of thorns;

come to him, now asking you to be saved, before he say "Depart," when the decision will be final, irreversible.

How interesting is the fact that Jesus is our Saviour! What a grand truth is this, that the Son of man is our Saviour! The very voice that welcomes to his bosom now will welcome to his kingdom then. It is the voice of a king in both instances — a royal word. He now says, it is true, "I stand at the door and knock, if any man will open," — standing at each man's heart a voluntary suppliant. But when we shall stand at the door of the kingdom, this same Jesus, no longer a suppliant, but a judge, will say, "Come," or "Depart." Then there will be no possibility of rejecting his words, — "Come in and be happy," or, "I know you not; depart, and be miserable."

At that day shall be the manifestation of the sons of God. I believe that the judgment of God, as far as the people of God are concerned, will not be, in the vulgar sense, a trial. There is no trial; it is not required. It is said, "He that believeth shall not come into judgment;" because, if I am now justified, I am judged already. I am accepted, I am righteous; the ordeal is passed, the acceptance is complete. Then what has the judgment-day to do for believers? To manifest publicly those that are now hidden. Hence, the judgment-day will be a publicly making known that these men the world now despises, — those poor men murdered and martyred, — those so long thought the offscouring of the earth, — those men who were hidden in cellars, in caves, in dens, the adherents of a religion which was visited by martyrdom, and denounced as superstition, — these are the sons of God. Here they are; the reproach is rolled away — they now appear just what they are; this is the day of their manifestation — they are like their Lord, and see him as he is: they are now seen to have been kings in disguise, royal ones in the robes of slaves.

We may gather from this subject that whatever is done in Christ's name now is possessed of a significance that time does not exhaust. Our actions must rise again in their echoes at the judgment-seat of Christ; our deeds and thoughts project their shadows into eternity. What a thought! Our actions shall be heard in their echoes at the judgment-seat of Christ; echoes that shall come to us, either in the sweet music, "Come, ye blessed," or shall be heard by us in rending crashes and in intolerable reverberations, "Depart, ye cursed." What we are will fix what we forever shall be.

When he will come, we know not. Christ's coming is the great topic of the New Testament. Whether next year, ten years, twenty years hence, we know not; but this we know, that he will come as a thief in the night; that he will come when men are asking, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and that the dead shall rise, and the living shall be changed. Watch; what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. And the Lord make us his now, and manifest us as his at that day, for his own name's sake!

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESPLENDENT ONES.

But who to these can turn,
And weigh them 'gainst a weeping world like this,
Nor feel his spirit burn
To grasp their so sweet bliss,
And mourn that exile hard which here his portion is ?

For there, and there alone,
Are peace, and joy, and never-dying love:
There, on a splendid throne,
Amid the choirs above,
Are glories and delights which never wane nor move.

“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” — MATTHEW 13 : 43.

I HAVE already investigated our expectation of “a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness:” or what Abraham, a pilgrim and a stranger patriarch, “looked for — a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” It is most important to study the verse prefixed to this chapter, as illustrating the character of those who are to live in that city that hath foundations, who are to be the inhabitants of that new earth, and to breathe that new, pure, and divine atmosphere, when the former heavens shall have passed away like a scroll, and the earth and the things that are therein shall have been burned up. After all, it most concerns us to ascertain, not what shall be the architectural structure of our future home, but what must be the spiritual

character of the inhabitants ; not where we shall be in the age to come, — though, if God has revealed it, it is our duty to study it, and to express our sentiments upon it ; but far more important, confessedly important, asserted in Scripture to be so, is the inquiry, Are we members of that happy family who are at home in the height and in the depth — everywhere ? Are we among those who are here pronounced to be righteous by him who cannot mistake, and who are prophesied to shine forth on that new earth, and in that divine city, like the sun, or, as Daniel states, “as the sun in the firmament, and the brightness of the stars for ever and ever” ?

The connection of the words quoted is abundantly obvious. “Then,” he says, “shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” “Then shall the righteous” — alluding to a time. What “then” is this ? The time after the earth and the things that are therein shall be burned up. After the “new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” have emerged from the ruin, — after the city for which the patriarch looked has come down from heaven, — after Jesus has pronounced the words, “Come, ye blessed,” — “*then* shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” The words of this promise occur at the close of a parable. “The field is the world ; the good seed are the children of the kingdom ; but the tares are the children of the wicked one ; the enemy that sowed them is the devil ; the harvest is the end of the world ; and the reapers are the angels.” The tares are gathered — when ? At the end of the world, and burned in the fire. In another parable Jesus said, Take care not to try to pull out the tares now, lest you pull out the wheat with them. The tares shall be taken out at the end of the world. We should endeavor to have the visible church as pure as possible, and the visible ministry as true as we can ; yet we cannot expect a pure Christian church till Christ comes. The field shall grow tares till the end ; and the Son of man only by himself, or

by the ministry of his angels, not the ministers of the Gospel, shall weed that field, and gather the tares to their doom, and the sheaves, the golden sheaves of the wheat, to his barns in the kingdom of our Father in heaven.

The character of those who are then to shine forth as the sun is that of "the righteous." Who are they? What man can say, looking into his own heart, turning over the leaves of memory, listening to the whispers or the thunders of conscience, I am righteous? The Bible has settled all controversy on this topic. "All have sinned." "There is none righteous, no, not one." David said so, many thousand years ago; and Paul repeats the same melancholy but faithful verdict, many hundreds of years afterwards, "Their throat is an open sepulchre;" "There is none righteous, no, not one;" "Their feet are swift to shed blood. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith it saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Such is the sweeping and unsparing verdict pronounced from a tribunal from which there is no appeal, and not pronounced on the ancient Jew and on the heathen Gentile only, but upon me, upon you, reader, upon all who are by nature the children of Adam, and born in sin and corruption. If this be so, and if there be no exception, there shall be surely none to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;" for it is only the righteous that are predicted thus to shine, and said to be thus admitted. Blessed fact! There is a perfect provision for us; there is a righteousness laid up for them who have sinned, whose mouths are thus stopped, who stand thus guilty before God. Those who are transplanted from the old Adam and grafted in the new; those who have the righteousness of faith, their only standing and their only title before God; those who have that sanctification and renewal of heart, those good fruits, and

that Holy Spirit, which are the evidence of their acceptance before God, and the work of the Holy Spirit; those who are justified by a righteousness without them, and simultaneously sanctified by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost within them; — these are “the righteous,” who “shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

But it may be asked, Where is this righteousness intimated? and on what authority do we assert the possibility or possession of this first righteousness by which we are justified before God? In the same passage in which we are told of our ruin, we are informed of the method of our acceptance. “All have sinned;” “therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified.” That is, there is no justification by the law; you are proved to have broken it at this moment, and no subsequent conformity to it, however exact, can justify you. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:” — what glorious accents are these! — “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare,” not his mercy, but “his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Now, this is the first and great part of that righteousness by which we are made righteous in the sight of God. Have we accepted Christ in and by faith? In the prospect of eternity is the whole stress of our hope laid upon this, that he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God by

him? We need nothing more; we must be satisfied with nothing less. Nothing we do can honor that law which we have broken. Nothing we suffer can exhaust that curse that we have incurred. No tears that penitents may shed, no blood that martyrs may pour out as festal wine, can expiate the least sin that taints the purest conscience in the whole universe of God. By deeds of the law, by anything we do, by aught we suffer, there is no acquittal or acceptance before God; but, by this righteousness which is without us, not in us, which is received by faith, not originated within us, which is as perfect the first moment of its acceptance as it will be at the time when we shall shine forth in the kingdom of our Father, we are made perfectly righteous in the sight of God, entitled to all heaven, because Christ is; we stand before God, accepted in Christ the beloved, a glorious church, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. Here, then, is our title.

But there is another righteousness spoken of in the Bible, namely, that of sanctification. We need not only a title, but a fitness for heaven. A title to a property must be a perfect one, or it is no title at all; if there be a flaw in it, the right of inheritance is gone. But the fitness for the enjoyment of a property may be more or less complete. Two men may have an equal title to two equal properties; but one may be much more fitted for the enjoyment of it, from his previous habits, dispositions, information, than the other. It is so with the future rest. We have all of us, if Christians, the equal pass-word; that pass-word which needs but to be mentioned, and we range the whole universe; we become free of heaven and earth in "Christ, and him crucified." But each of us may have different degrees of fitness, from the convert of yesterday, to the martyr that seals by his blood the principles that he has been taught by grace. But more or less such fitness is required. In fitness for it we shall grow

Our daily life shall be a constant struggle to put on all excellency, and to be made meet by the Spirit of God for the kingdom of heaven. These two are inseparable. There is no such thing as a man being entitled to heaven, and not being fit for it. There is no such thing as one being fit for heaven, and not being entitled to it. These two are inseparable. Whom God elects, Jesus redeems, and the Spirit sanctifies. We are saved by the Triune God. I could not trust in a Socinian's God to save me. We are saved by a God who chose us before the foundation of the world. We are saved by God the Saviour, who hath washed us by his blood, and clothed us in his righteousness. And we are saved by God the Spirit, who changes the heart of stone to the heart of flesh, and makes us live to God through Jesus Christ. Man can raise the noblest cities on which the sun shines. He can erect lofty columns to commemorate illustrious worth. He can cut roads through the solid mountains, span arms of the sea, and connect isles and continents together. But all the men in the world cannot make a child of God, or give a poor lost sinner a title or a meetness for heaven. Man's strength in his own sphere shows man's origin to have been magnificent; but man's inability to justify and sanctify himself shows the depth of moral ruin into which he has fallen, and the sovereignty of that grace that looks upon us in the midst of our chaos, and out of us makes living temples, vocal with the praise and the glory of our God. These, then, are "the righteous." These are here connected with the gracious promise. These, who are thus righteous by grace, not by merit, shall "shine forth" in the kingdom of their Father. The promise of their future shining indicates the fact of their present concealment. Christians, we are told in Scripture, are now hidden. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." "The world," it is said, "knoweth us not." "Our life is hid with

Christ in God." The Psalmist calls them "God's hidden ones." Christian character we must not expect to be admired by a world that hates it. I admit that the world can admire honesty, and certain outside graces, beautiful in their place, possessed by the Christian and possessed by the worldling too; but the world cannot admire real, living religion, that moral beauty which the king's daughter alone has, which is inner, not outer, — spiritual, not material. The man of the world can appreciate the ancient Parthenon, glorious and majestic in its ruins. He can admire the vastness of the stupendous pyramids, tombs as they are. He can estimate the magnificence of St. Peter's, at Rome. He can admire the glories of the sky when lighted up with all its splendors, and the beauties of the earth when clothed with its summer verdure and blossoms. But living stones he does not understand, and living temples he cannot appreciate. Christian character is a thing his eye is too blind to see, his touch too coarse to handle, his soul too dead to appreciate and to applaud. And hence, whatever a Christian does as a Christian, the world will misapprehend. Let a Christian be humble, the world will pronounce him mean. Let him be zealous, the world will call him a fanatic. Let him be faithful, speaking the truth honestly and plainly, and the world will forthwith denounce him as furious. Let a Christian be whatever grace can make him, and the world cannot understand it. It is the inner life that is hid with Christ in God. Hence, they have been persecuted, they have been burned, they have been misrepresented, they have been hated of all men, they have passed through much tribulation, they have learned by practical experience, "Marvel not if the world hate you." The world can understand baptized men, but it cannot understand regenerated men. The world can comprehend a psalm, but it cannot understand praise. It can admire a liturgy, it cannot discern prayer. It can appreciate the skirt of the

garment, and the fringe upon it, but the living heavenly life that is beneath is hid from it, for it is hid with Christ in God.

Another reason why Christians are hid here, and do not shine at present in the kingdom of their Father, is this: the great majority of believers, unfortunately in one sense, I may admit, belong to the humbler and the poorer ranks of life. It is true now, as it was in the apostles' days, it was the common people that heard Christ gladly. It was the priest, the Pharisee, the Sadducee, that hated, detested, denounced him. To them, therefore, he said, "Ye hypocrites!" The great sin which Jesus condemned was the sin of hypocrisy. But to the poor woman caught in a crime he spoke purely, as became one holy as Deity, yet in the language of tenderness. And even when he was angry, it is said, "Jesus looked upon them with anger." But, it is added — as if there was something in his anger that is not often in our hearts — "being grieved at the hardness of their hearts." The very anger that was conveyed in a stern rebuke had an inner feeling of grief at the hardness of their hearts. God's people are still mainly the common people. "Not many noble, not many wise, not many mighty, are called." "God hath chosen the poor of this world." "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them." Now, because such are in lowly circumstances, their Christianity is not seen. I have no doubt that there is more Christianity in London than we see or suspect. We can see Christianity only when it flashes from on high. We cannot see those beautiful lights that are shining in lowly and miserable places, in the forms of patience, meekness, gentleness, battling with hunger, and nakedness, and cold, — unknown martyrs. There is many a martyr in a London cellar, whose praise the trumpet does not sound, whose commendation the newspaper column does not record. And when, perhaps, we say, "I only am left alone," we may have in our parish, in our neigh-

borhood, seven thousand, unseen by us, but seen by the all-seeing God, who have never bowed the knee to Baal. It is thus that, because piety is much of it necessarily in lowly life, the righteous do not now shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. These flowers are hidden, because they are in the sequestered nooks of the world. These diamonds are now incrustated with poverty, and therefore they cannot responsively reflect the light of the sun. Were men of real religion placed in the high places of the world, a little religion would go a great way. But, when true religion is placed amidst the pressure of narrow circumstances, it takes a great deal to penetrate the thick wrappage, and make itself be seen and felt from afar. Place a single candle on the spire of a cathedral, and thousands can see it. Place a burning and a shining light at the bottom of a coal-pit, and only half a dozen miners can see it. God's people are in the subterranean crypts of this great life of ours. By and by they shall be lifted up into the grand cathedral itself, and there they "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Christians are now much hid, because their very nature makes them opposed to display. They are, in proportion as they are Christians, clothed with humility. They accept contentedly the place that God has given them. If they be lights, they are satisfied to shine just in the place in which God has located them. If, indeed, we be Christians, we shall refuse to be drawn out of our place by the praises of men; and we shall scorn to be driven out of it by the fear, or the hatred, or the persecution, of men. Jesus says to us, "If ye be Christians, let your light shine before men." There is a remarkable distinction in these last words, worth noticing. He does not say, "Strive to shine." These are not the words of Jesus. But he says, "Let your light shine;" that is, do not sinfully conceal it. Do not gather around it clouds that should not be there; do not put your light under a bushel;

be light, but neither labor nor refuse to shine. Do not go up to a hill-top, that you may thus shine more conspicuously; and do not go down into a coal-pit, where I have not sent you, in order to conceal it. Neither strive to shine, nor labor to conceal your character; but be light, and you shall be luminous. Remove all that obstructs, and you shall shine, not as you will one day do, but as far as it is possible now. Be salt, and you must salt all that is around you; be light, and you cannot help being luminous within the range of your influence. Be anxious, not about the place or the candlestick, but be careful to trim the light that shines in that place, or is planted in that candlestick. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Christians are often hid now, because they are compassed with infirmities. Bad taste is often accompanied with true grace. The world sees not the grace, it witnesses the bad taste; it therefore condemns, unfairly, the man and his faith together, and thus his Christianity is hid. There are many Christians, too, who are lights; but they are fickle and unsteady lights. Others are intensely denominational lights. Others allow flames to mingle with the light that ought to be repressed, or rather ought not to be there. We need, in manifesting our light to the world, as far as we are called upon to do it, not only all the wisdom of the serpent, but all the harmlessness of the dove, which is not always combined with it. But, if our light be hid, if our graces be misrepresented, if our motives be misconstrued, if our character be misinterpreted, if our humility be called meanness, our boldness rashness, and all our graces caricatured, we must not be discouraged. No strange thing has happened. Abel, the first Christian upon earth after Adam was converted, died a martyr; Enoch walked with God, and therefore the world knew him not; Jeremiah pined in a dungeon; Daniel was

cast into the lion's den; the Baptist was beheaded; all the apostles, with the exception of John, died martyrs. These the world knew not, because it knew not Christ. The wonder is to me, not that true Christians are much reproached, but that they are not more so. When I consider their own infirmities and the ever-watchful enmity of the world, when I consider their character, when I consider all that God has written about them, I am thankful that the indirect influence of the Gospel has so saturated the world that the direct light of the Gospel is not violently quenched, and its advocates martyred in the midst of it.

Such, then, is the condition of Christians now,—hid, reproached, not known by the world; but a day comes when these righteous ones, in the language of our Lord, “shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

This is certain. It is not a peradventure, but an absolute promise. It is not what may be, but what God has said must be. We may tarry in the present darkness that surrounds us hours and years before this glorious future; but come it will. No conflict is ours without victory. No obscurity is ours without a coming splendor. Frosts may nip the verdure of spring, the caterpillar may gnaw the summer leaf, or violence may cut short our lives; but no power can dim, no force can prevent the fulfilment of that glorious promise which can penetrate the poor man's hovel, as well as the rich man's hall,—“Ye, the righteous, then shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father.”

The place of this shining is represented to be the kingdom of our Father. “I appoint unto you a kingdom.” “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you” in “the new heavens and the new earth,” in that “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” That kingdom is made up of—what? Righteousness, peace, joy. These are its constituent elements. Its subjects are the pure in heart, the peace-

makers, the mourners, the persecuted for righteousness' sake, all that love the Saviour in deed and in truth. But, lest the promise should appear too grand and too awful, lest the prospect of a kingdom should convey only the ideas of majesty and of grandeur, it is called "the kingdom of our Father." There is thrown over that kingdom a home-like aspect, to take away from it its awfulness. That sceptre is in our Father's hand. That realm is under our Father's surveillance. Those many mansions are in our Father's house. Love is its pavilion. Joy is its atmosphere. Peace is its glorious canopy. We shall sit down in it with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father."

But it is declared they "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." All the shades that have obscured them here shall be swept away. All the clouds and darkness that have settled on the Christian character shall be removed; and Christians in that kingdom shall not only be seen, but they shall shine. They shall not only be light, but they shall also be radiant—radiant in the glory of that Sun whose righteousness is theirs, whose kingdom is theirs, whose throne is theirs. The Gospel of John tells us of his priesthood; the Apocalypse of John tells us of his crown. In that kingdom we shall see both; we shall see the Priest upon his throne, and shine in his sacred glory as the sun for ever and ever.

In that grand transformation, of which we hope to be the heirs, not the soul only, but the body, shall shine. I believe that the face that now looks upon this page, in so far as it is the exponent of a soul touched by the grace and ransomed by the blood of Jesus, shall shine. These very countenances of ours, reconstructed, purified, ennobled, dignified,—the mortal that is in them taken away, and the immortal substituted,—the corruptible that is in them exhausted, and the incorruptible thrown in,—recognized all by him, and each by

the other, — shall shine in the splendor of an unsetting sun, and in the kingdom of our Father forever.

We read, in the Gospel of Matthew, that Mount Tabor became for a moment the dim mirror and type of that glory in which we shall shine in everlasting splendor. Tabor, with the Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah appeared in the glory of Jesus, was merely a fragment of the future sparkling for an hour on the bosom of the present; a portion of the coming glory vouchsafed to the pilgrims that were wandering towards it, to cheer and encourage them on the way. But even that splendor that gleamed on Mount Tabor, in which Peter called out, "Let us build three tabernacles here," and, "it is good for us to be here," was but the dim lustre of a day, in comparison with the shining in the kingdom of our Father. It was but the evanescent and the transient flash of an *Aurora Borealis*, compared with the permanent splendor of the shining in the kingdom of our Father. Moses, when he saw a gleam of this glory, had to be hidden in the rock, and to be covered with God's hand; and the apostles, who saw this glory on Mount Tabor, had to see the cloud let down, lest it should dazzle their unpurged eyes; and we are told that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God:" — they need to be changed: — and thus all they saw upon this Tabor was but an imperfect type of what they shall see and be when they shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father.

Then, Christ shall be glorified in us, and we shall be glorified in him. Then, his jewels shall all be made up, and collected, and placed in his diadem, and reflect not their own light, but the light of that Sun of righteousness in which they shall shine in the kingdom of their Father.

This predicted lustre, this splendor of the coming state, shall be far more lasting than that of time. The image "as the sun" is designed to convey to us the idea of permanency. When we speak of permanent things on earth, of course we

speak relatively ; but, of all things that we see, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the mountains, are the oldest. The same sun that shone on Adam and Eve, when they walked amid the parterres of Paradise, shines upon us. That very sun that looked down upon Noah, and wove out of its beauteous beams, intermingling with the falling rain-drops, the bow that told him that another flood should not dismantle the earth, still looks down on us. That sun that shone upon the patriarch in his wanderings, and suggested to Malachi a nobler Sun, yet to arise with healing under his wings, rises each day, and will rise to-morrow, looking as beautiful and fresh as if he had been just made. The righteous shall shine with the splendor, and with more than the permanency, of that sun, in the kingdom of their Father. But the very lustre in which the righteous shine shall evermore glorify that Eternal Sun : for so teaches this very simile. “They shall shine forth as the sun” means, they shall shine with the borrowed light of that sun. They shall shine because they are shone upon. The flowers, the fruit, the grass, the unfolding buds, the rich vegetation which the earth puts on as her summer robe, seem to me, as they come every season, silently but eloquently to address that sun ; and each flower, each ripening fruit, each blade of green grass, if it could become animate and vocal, seems to say to that orb, gaining power and progress every day, “ O, sun, these tints of ours are the creation of thy beams ; this rich aromatic fragrance of ours all comes from thy warmth ; and our exquisite perfume is but our responsive gratitude, our matin song to thee, in whose light we shine, from whose warmth we live.” And if this be so in the case of the dumb things of this world, it shall be more so truly with the righteous in the kingdom of their Father. As they shine like the dew-drops of the morning, as these flowers grow and bloom in the garden of their Father, they shall ascribe the praise, and the honor, and the glory, not to a

created sun, but to that Sun of righteousness under whose wings there is healing ; the redeemed shall cast their crowns before the Lamb, ascribing to him glory and honor ; and not one recovered flower, however shattered it was upon earth, when planted in heaven shall ascribe one tint of its beauty to any but Christ, or one atom of its fragrance to any but Christ ; and not one gem, detached from the earth, and set in his diadem, shall reflect any light but the light of him who selected it, and polished it, and made it the bright mirror of his own bright and blessed countenance for ever and ever. In the greatness of their number, in the beauty of their character, in the perfection of their resurrection bodies, in the splendor of their abode, in the ecstasy of their song, the righteous shall glorify Jesus forever and forever. If this old earth, with all its stains and its imperfections now, — with all the repressing influences of sin under which it groans and travails in agony, in shame, and sorrow, — can put on such splendor in the summer season, that that very splendor shall magnify the sun which, in God's hand, feeds it and occasions it, how much more glorious shall this earth appear, when that Sun of righteousness, who is now below the horizon, whose beams are therefore horizontal and comparatively cold, shall emerge at that day, and shine no longer horizontal, but vertical, and no man shall have a shadow ; because nothing shall have sin, or stain, or fault ! How beautiful will this earth be ; how noble that kingdom ! How worthy is such a hope of our hearts ! How pale, how poor, how paltry, is earth, with all its present grandeur, in comparison with that hope with which our hearts may now beat, — the hope of shining “as the sun in the kingdom of our Father” ! And what a contrast will there be between the earth that now is and the earth that shall be ! The more that one looks upon the world as it is, the more one is penetrated with sorrow at all that is in it. The nobler and the purer the heart that

estimates society aright, the more that heart swells with sympathetic suffering, till every vein in it is charged with sorrow at a world so wretched as it is, so sinful in God's sight. One cannot look around upon the great mass of society in any one capital, or in any one city, without seeing that the sins and the sufferings of humanity strive and struggle together which shall have the victory. Of suffering we cannot cease to be witnesses, in all spheres and under all circumstances. It pours upon our hearts through every sense. It looks down upon us from the wretched garret. It stares up to us from the pestilential cellar. Sin is seen in the drunkard staggering to his home, preparing to revenge itself in its rebound; and suffering is seen in the poor, half-naked wife, with her half-starved babes, — the evidence that sin and suffering are twins, — a union which begins with the cradle, and terminates with the grave. We see the very Sabbath, that was made for man, in the case of millions turned into a day of insensibility from the exhaustion and fatigue of the week, or into a day of sorrow from wants, the dire and painful wants with which it is accompanied. Sin and misery act and react, till society seems at times to threaten to fall to pieces under the weight of its own corruption.

This is what the world is; and he that has dived deepest into it, and felt its pulse with the greatest impartiality, must admit that the portrait is not overdrawn. But, blessed be God! this is not the end of life. I do solemnly believe that, if this world were our ail, there would not be on its face such a wretched creature as poor man, with instincts that ally him to the sky, and yet with sufferings on earth that he cannot flee from, and a thirst of life only to be bitterly disappointed in death. Of all creatures, man is the most miserable, if there be no future. But there is a future. Christianity is a picture of it. The whole Bible is vocal with it. Our hearts heave with the expectation of it. We

cannot surrender it. We dare not, we will not, give it up. It is the great and bright prospect that sustains us in our course. We cling in hope to that joyous future. It makes us cleave to the Bible, and love the sanctuary, and rejoice in the hope of glory and immortality.

This life, then, is but a fragment of our being. It is but the vestibule that leads to the kingdom of our Father. In that world, no man shall be seen living at times a little lower than the angels, and anon a little higher than the brutes. Man shall no more be seen amid sin and misery, hope and despair, agony and joy, the groans of the suffering and the cries of revelry mingling together, and making this world a scene of wretchedness and sorrow. Earth's groans shall cease, man's sins shall be expunged; all things shall be re-made, and re-made holy. I solemnly believe that, when that day comes, and this kingdom dawns upon us, and this Sun bathes us in his rich and everlasting lustre, we shall be amazed that we so clung to earth; that we were so unwilling to let the coil of life unwind itself; that we were so reluctant to leave the old and shattered ruins, and so callous to the prospects of that bright, that glorious and happy day. But come it will, as sure as to-morrow's sun will rise. Dawn it will, as sure as to-morrow's twilight will dawn upon us. When monarchy, with all its power and magnificence, shall have melted away like a snow-flake, — when democracies, with all their strife of turbulence and tongues, shall have passed away like a troubled vision, — our anointed eyes shall see the approach of a nobler kingdom; our circumcised ears shall hear the harmonies of a happier state; and in that life we shall live, soul and body, in which our hearts already beat and palpitate, where our treasure and our hope is.

“ Pilgrim, burdened with thy sin,
Come the way to Zion's gate;
There, till mercy shut thee in,
Knock, and weep, and watch, and wait.

“ Knock, — He knows the sinner’s cry ;
 Weep, — He loves the mourner’s tears ;
 Watch, — for saving grace is nigh ;
 Wait, — till heavenly light appears.

“ Hark ! it is the bridegroom’s voice —
 Welcome, pilgrim, to thy rest !
 Now, within the gate rejoice,
 Safe, and sealed, and bought, and blest.

“ Safe from all the lures of vice,
 Sealed by signs the chosen know,
 Bought by love, and blood the price, —
 Blest the mighty debt to owe.

“ Holy pilgrim ! what for thee
 In a world like this remains ?
 From thy guarded breast shall flee
 Fear, and shame, and doubts, and pains.

“ Fear, the hope of heaven shall fly ;
 Shame, from glory’s view retire ;
 Doubt, in certain rapture die ;
 Pains, in endless bliss expire.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BETTER COUNTRY.

“The trampled earth returns a sound of fear —
A hollow sound, as if I walked on tombs ;
And lights, that tell of cheerful homes, appear
Far off, and die like hope amid the glooms.
A mournful wind across the landscape flies,
And the wide atmosphere is full of sighs.

“And I with faltering footsteps journey on,
Watching the stars that roll the hours away,
Till the faint light that guides me now is gone,
And like another life the glorious day
Shall open o’er me from the empyreal height,
With warmth and certainty and boundless light.”

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off ; and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.” — HEBREWS 11 : 13—16.

THE great hope which the patriarchs had constantly in view, as we read in the passage which I have placed at the head of this chapter, was what is called in the previous verse “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” The same object, or, rather, the site of that sublime erection, is again described as a “country,” “a better coun-

try," "a heavenly country;" in seeking which they felt as pilgrims and strangers upon the earth, with no desire to return to that country which they had just left.

The same hope which gladdened the heart of Abraham gladdens the heart of the Christian still. Man stands by faith; he is happy by hope. The same great hope which they set before them is set before us — a "better country," a country that is "an heavenly one," that has on it "a city that hath foundations, that has its builder and its maker, God."

The object of the hope of the patriarchs was a country — an expression that conveys much to the heart that weighs it, and yet it is only one amid many expressions used to denote that blessed prospect which dawns upon us. Is there anything exquisitely dear in the recollection of home? That word, so musical in its sound, so magnificent in its contents, is summoned to express the heaven, the reward, the ultimate happiness, of the Christian. Is there anything permanent in "mansions," as contrasted with the evanescence and the insecurity of tents? "In my Father's house are many *μοναὶ* (mansions), — permanent, abiding. I go to prepare a place for you." Is there anything stirring as the trumpet in the very sound of one's country, that country for which a Codrus died, for which a Regulus returned to suffer, at the very name and reminiscences of which a Jew's heart beats with joy? That word is used to paint the rest that remains for the people of God. Is there anything of law or order, of dignity, of repose, in a city? That emblem is used to imply the excellence of that abode that Christ has gone to prepare for the people of God. Thus, the Holy Spirit exhausts language of its expressiveness, and the stores of nature of their most magnificent symbols, in order that all combined may set forth the lustre and the glory of that country which Abraham saw from afar, — that home toward which we are pilgrims and

strangers, looking for a country,—a better one, even a heavenly one.

What has been the great and what is now one of the strongest and most influential powers or motives in the human heart? A desire to find some better place, some lovelier spot, than we now have. For what does the tradesman toil? for what does the physician practise? for what does man hope at the decline and the close of life? Some sheltered nook, some quiet spot, where, if he cannot have a rest that will never be moved, he may have, at least, a foretaste and foreshadow of it. What was it that carried Columbus across the western wave, amid insubordination within his ship, and the unexpectedly wild waves that roared and curled around and without? What sustained him on the unsounded sea, amid the untraversed waste of waters? The hope of a better country. What was it that sustained the hearts of the Pilgrim Fathers, when, driven forth from this land by stern ecclesiastical persecution, they went to the far distance, and across the western wave, and feared not the iron-bound coast or the rugged and the unknown territory on which they set foot? It was the hope and prospect of a better, even a free and peaceful country. What is the explanation of the frequent mad efforts to revolutionize Europe, made by each country in its turn? The expectation and belief of man, in his folly, that he can create what only “cometh down from heaven,”—a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

This indigenious and indomitable hope is not to be disappointed. This expectation, which is almost an instinct, is yet to be realized; and therefore we are told that before the patriarchs there stretched in the distant but brightening perspective a sure hope, a better country.

In what respects, let us ask ourselves, is this country better? I may notice, by way of preliminary remark, however, that a better country without better inhabitants is impossible

The change required is not only in the country to be inhabited, but in the people that are to inhabit it. Man's constant and his most erroneous impression is, that all he needs is a change of circumstances; whereas, the truth is, that what he needs to make him happy is a change himself. Man's constant idea is, that were his country — its clime, its air, its soil — transfigured, he would be happy; whereas, God's testimony is, that except a man be born again he cannot see nor taste what happiness is, in any latitude in heaven or earth. The poor sick patient fancies that, if he can only change his bed, he will be well; whereas, nothing but restored health will make him happy. It is an inner, not an outer, transfiguration that man needs. He who is truly godlike must be happy everywhere. A man who is not so can be happy nowhere in the universe. And therefore, before we enter this better country, or enjoy the happiness that belongs to it, we must have better hearts. We must have an inner and moral transformation before we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, or capable of witnessing the splendors, or breathing the atmosphere, or deriving joy from the panorama, of that better country for which the patriarchs looked. This land is a revelation to faith. Faith is the gift of God, and so is the possession of a heart that has been renewed by his grace and his Spirit.

With this previous explanation, we may try to ascertain, if we can, why it is here called "a better country."

There is contrast, and that contrast, by following it out, may suggest to us the reason of this epithet "Better."

First, that country which will succeed the dislocation of the things that are will be a better country in so far as it will be composed of better *matériel*. The renovated earth will be as superior to the earth that now is, as man's resurrection body will be superior to the body he now has. The change in its elements will be complete. The corruptible of the

earth will put on incorruption. The mortal in nature will put on immortality. Death, with which creation is now saturated, shall be swallowed up in victory. Sin defiles the earth over its every acre. Its foul trail may be traced from Paradise in ruins, onward to the uttermost end of the globe. There is no spot it has not breathed on. There is no flower it has not blasted. There is no beautiful scene it has not spoiled and tarnished by its pestilential presence. Disloyalty to God is the fever that now agitates all creation; the heavy curse that keeps nature from bursting into beauty; the repressive incubus that withholds and keeps back all its hidden powers, and makes it groan perpetually. This sin, disloyalty and curse, shall be utterly swept away, and there shall be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." God's blessing penetrating all, God's presence consecrating all, shall make the earth that was pronounced good at the first still better at the last; a country in which there shall be no waning moons, no setting suns; in which there shall be no ebbing tides nor stormy seas; no lightning to scathe its cedars, nor earthquake to explode and devastate "the city that hath foundations;"—a country that will be a sublime observatory, a holy temple, an everlasting home. The prospect is real; the possession of it is secured by the oath and the promise to the people of God.

But this city will be a better country in another respect. It will have far better society. The love of society is indigenuous to man. He is made for society. Nay, it was pronounced of Paradise itself, that even there "it was not good for man to be alone." Intense solitude is intense misery. Even a monk has fellow-monks. And this future country, wherever it will be, and whatever be its component parts, will not be a solitary niche for each individual to occupy; it will be the "heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made

perfect, Jesus the mediator of all, and God the judge of all." Society at present is full of uncertainty and misapprehensions; its best circles are pervaded by suspicion. No man has perfect confidence at all times in his brother. The face is not always the exact exponent of the heart. The word is not always the true echo of the thought. Man often seems to his brother what he is not, and is what he seems not. But in that country the face will be the perfect and transparent exponent of the mind; the faintest word will be the truest embodiment of the thought. There will be no interrupting sense of misery within; there will be no disturbing fears or perplexities without. All that corrupts and contaminates our social system will be exhausted, and happy because holy, men will be the inhabitants of that better country.

It will be a better country, too, in that it will have better government. The best of governments on earth, we well know, are necessarily imperfect. All have been tried in succession, and the only lesson that has been gathered from the experiment is, that where there is the holiest and the best people, there there is the best-working and most useful government. In republics there have been found rivalry, collision, that have issued in distraction and disruption. In monarchies, vain-glory, ambition, pride, that have fostered tyranny. But in that better country there will be the perfection of law and of duty, because of the inspiration of love. In that better country the government will be complete. Christ's sceptre will be a sceptre of righteousness, the principedom that of peace. The people will be all love, all loyalty and obedience, and therefore all joy; suspicion, rivalry and envy, will flee like mists before the sun. The cherubim of the sky, and the children of the earth,—the angels that have dwelt always beside the throne, and the infants that have entered only yesterday,—patriarchs and apostles, evangelists and saints and martyrs,—shall walk its golden streets, and live

beneath that holy sceptre, and enjoy in that better country a better society and better government than they ever enjoyed or dreamed of upon earth.

It is called, in the next place, a better country, because we shall have there better employments. Much of our time here is required for toil, whether with the head or with the hand, in order to provide bread by the way. What must I eat? however humbling a question, is a question that every man must prepare himself to answer in this present world. But such questions are all disposed of in that better rest. There, prayer is lost in possession, hope in praise, conflict in victory, tears in everlasting joys. There, there will be errands of beneficence of which we shall be never weary, embassies of love in which there can occur no disappointment, researches that will be never vain, and discoveries that shall never disappoint. There will be better employments in that better country.

And, in the last place, there will be better enjoyments in it. Here, our brightest joys are evanescent; only some earnest of the future joy are vouchsafed to us. A few flowers only gathered from that paradise are given us; and these even, as in an uncongenial climate, wither while we look upon them. In this remote land, we hear but a few strains of the harmonies of the blessed, and these only for a little; but there, the joys shall be pure and permanent, the harmonies glorious. Here, joy enters into us; but there, we shall breathe an atmosphere fragrant with bliss, and enter an ocean of joy. Here, cities decay, commerce changes its markets, the loveliest structures that beautify the earth fall to ruin; but there, is everlasting spring, a city that never shall be moved, a country better in all its component materials, into which the patriarchs of three thousand years ago and the Christians of to-day shall enter and rejoice together.

But the brightest feature in it is what we now have by

faith, then by sight. God is not ashamed to be called the patriarchs' God; and, because the patriarchs' God, our God also. I believe the study of the blessed life will be God manifest in the flesh. When David pictured to himself the brightest thing he should see, and the intensest joy he should taste, in heaven, he thus spoke, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?"—looking on the Lamb slain, on the wondrous Saviour, who, by a wondrous salvation, has saved so great a multitude of so great sinners. That spectacle was so captivating, so entrancing, that David could see nothing else in heaven but Christ the Lamb upon the throne. He filled his whole horizon. And when Paul speaks of what this future, this "heavenly," this "better" country will be, he specifies as its chiefest joy "to be with Christ, which is far better." And when David speaks of its joys, he says, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore." It is a city inlaid with Deity, a people full of God. It is a light thing whether that country be in the utmost bounds of the visible universe, or whether it be on the globe on which we now live. It will be the presence of the Lamb in the midst of a sanctified, regenerated people that will constitute its chief joy.

The patriarchs saw this better country. Faith, in their case, spanned many thousand years. They anticipated that country before it came. In the light of those splendid promises, they saw the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." To a Christian, a promise is not a mere sound of exquisite music, but a powerful impulse. A promise of a better country is not a mere portrait for him to study, but a strong attraction that draws him to the better land. Every promise that a Christian hears is like a voice from heaven, "Come up hither;" "Come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, the spirits of just men made perfect."

We are told in this passage that the pilgrims who looked for this better country had no desire to return ; and it is said, with exquisite simplicity, that if they had sought to return they had plenty of opportunities. Abraham might have gone back to Mesopotamia, or to Ur of the Chaldees ; Isaac and Jacob might have returned to their fathers, and spent their days with the worshippers of idols, in a country picturesque with scenes, but not radiant with the glory of God. Many addressed them in different moods,—“Return to us ; eat, and drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die.” But other voices, the voices that ring in the promises, addressed them, “Run the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of your faith. This is not your rest : there remaineth a rest for the people of God.” And so it should be with us. If we are the people of God, we profess to have left the lust of the eye, the pride of life, the love of the world ; to have turned our back upon all that charms the flesh, that captivates the senses, and makes man the slave of sin. Every Christian has physically an opportunity to return. We may again select the world’s amusements, the world’s dissipation, the world’s folly. Physically we can do it ; the opportunity to return is within every one’s reach. But, when I speak to a Christian, I speak to one who has no desire to return, and therefore he will not return. He has abjured the world’s sins ; he has renounced the world’s vanities. His heart is charged with a sublimer hope ; his affections stretch forward to and rest upon a lovelier spectacle. He is looking for a city that hath foundations ; for a country, a better country, even an heavenly one. If we have thus, then, left the world,—that is, the old country that Abraham left, Ur of the Chaldees,—and if we are looking for a better country, and a city that hath foundations, we shall show that this is our position and our aspiration, by our life. They who are absorbed by the cares of the world, who are anxious only about its pleas-

ures, in whose hearts its profits are the absorbing thought, cannot be said to have left the world; they are still in it, and of it, and living by it, and resting upon it. If we have abandoned the world, abjured its sins, renounced its follies, and set our hearts toward this country and our hopes heavenward, then the light of this world will be darkened by the brilliancy of that one; the love of this world will be overpowered by the prospect of a better one; our glory will be drawn down from afar; our riches will be the unsearchable riches of Christ; our hearts will ever pulsate toward our home, and our faces look thitherward. The Jew, wherever he was driven, never forgot Jerusalem. When he prayed to God, like Daniel, he opened his window and looked with his eyes toward Jerusalem. The Jew was a physical and material symbol of what a Christian should be. Our hearts should be toward the heavenly Jerusalem, our eyes and our affections upon that rest that remaineth for the people of God; and, as we pass along, the thoughts where it is, and how soon we shall be in it, and what is its glory, ought to be more or less constantly before us. Amid all sounds, we should hear the voice of our Father. Amid all sights, we should see traces of his wisdom, and beneficence, and love. The sweep of years, that dims all things, should only brighten our prospects; and the decay of all that is magnificent around us should only prompt us to look for something beyond the reach of time,—a city that hath foundations, a country that endureth for ever and ever.

And if we are thus looking for a better country, and turning our backs upon the old one, we shall confess, as the patriarchs are said to have confessed, that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It is not that we should wear pilgrim dresses, but that we should have pilgrim hearts. Such pilgrim hearts may be under royal purple, as well as under the meanest rags. Real Christianity is not a thing shown ostentatiously without; it is a life inwrought by the Spirit of God.

If we have the spirit, the hopes, the prospects of Abraham, we shall confess, with one of these patriarchs, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." He confessed that he was a pilgrim; and if we have the pilgrim feeling, we shall see no living water except what comes from the fountain of living water, no living bread except what comes down from heaven,—that bread of which if a man eat he shall live forever; for man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.

When sometimes you have been enabled, in the providence of God, to visit a strange land, or to walk upon the streets of a foreign capital, all around you has been strange; its streets unknown, their directions, and the places that they lead to, as new to you as the place that you had visited. Should some one in the midst of that capital ask you the way to another section of that city, your answer would be, "I am a stranger; I cannot tell you." In respect to all that interests the world our answer should be, "I am a stranger." If you are asked if you love the playhouse, "I am a stranger; I have ceased to go there:" or, "It is so long that I have no recollection of it." If you are asked, "Are you charmed with the music of the opera?"—"It may be beautiful, but I am a stranger." "Have you any sympathy with that amusement, or any satisfaction in it?" If it is not congenial, your answer must be, "I am a stranger; I have never been there." This is the perfection of our pilgrim state. We are strangers, and pilgrims, looking for a city that hath foundations, taking the innocent joys and pleasures of life by the way, but never trying to seek our rest or our satisfaction here.

If we are looking for this city that hath foundations, this better country, we shall try to lead others to walk in the same way, and to look for the same blessed and better country. Our procession, though it be a procession of pilgrims, is a

grand and a noble one. It is not like that of the pilgrims to Mecca, or like that of Romish pilgrims to some shrine of some imaginary saint; for we “know in whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep what we have committed to him against that day.” The perils on the way only endear and deepen in our hearts the hope of its conclusion; and in trying to lead others to join us, and to make them fellow-pilgrims and sojourners, we shall tell them less of the trials of the way, — though these we cannot conceal, — and more of the brightness and glory of its certain end.

If we are looking for a better country, as pilgrims and strangers in this one, surely we shall often anticipate it. We may depend upon it, whatever is nearest and dearest to a man's heart he must frequently meditate upon. And, in looking into his heart, a man may generally ascertain what is the dearest thing in his affections, by asking himself what thing comes oftenest into my mind, absorbs most entirely my thoughts, and exercises the most plastic and directive influence over the whole tone and character of my conduct. We cannot have any strong hope of a better country, if we have not some joy — a deepening and a brightening joy — as we draw near to it. It is stated of Godfrey of Bouillon, when leading the crusaders to Jerusalem, that the instant his army saw its dismantled towers shining in the rising sun, they shouted with joy till the very earth shook beneath them. It is told of the ten thousand, in the celebrated retreat of Xenophon, that, when they saw the sea for which they had longed, their shouts *Θάλασσα! Θάλασσα!* made the very shores vibrate with the echoes. They, at the sight of an earthly; we, at the nearing prospect of a better country. Ever, therefore, as we catch a gleam of its glory, or hear a note of its songs, our expectations ought to burn brighter, our joys to increase in brilliancy, and we should long, like David, for that blessed country in which we shall be no more strangers and

foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the patriarchs, and with the saints that have fallen asleep in Jesus.

It is added, in the next place, in this beautiful passage, that all these patriarchs who thus "received the promises," who saw them afar off, and rejoiced as they saw them; who were persuaded of their truth and their reality, and so embraced them; who confessed, because of the superior attraction of that better country, and because of their thorough conviction of the reality and the substance of the promises that pointed to it, that they were strangers in the world, having no sympathy with its pursuits, no fondness for its tastes, preferring, as they did, a day in the courts of the Lord to a thousand in the most splendid of the gates of sin, — it is said of these men, that they not only declared that they sought a country by the tone and direction and the bearing of their life, — by their hopes, their sympathies, their anticipations, — but that they would not return to the country that they had left seeking a better one; and the consequence was, they "all died," as they had lived, "in faith." Thus those that die in faith are generally found to have been those that lived by faith. It is, many have frequently remarked, a solemn thing to die. It is a far more solemn thing to live. We need not trouble ourselves about our death, if only we trouble our hearts by many an anxious inquiry about the nature, the impulse, the substance, of our life. If we are anxious how to live, God will relieve us of all the burden and anxiety of how to die. Let us make sure that we live, looking for a better country, and any one may guarantee, on the testimony of God, that we shall die only to enter into the possession of that country. Hence, they that thus lived expecting a better country all died in faith. What folly is it for certain men to talk as if the patriarchs had no expectation of a life beyond the grave! Does not every verse in the passage on which I am commenting tell that they regarded

this life as only the vestibule of a nobler beyond the grave? Does it not show that, as they lived in hope, so they died, not disappointed, but certain that the promises, which had sounded so musical in their hearts upon the earth, would issue in their happy hearing in the tones and combinations of that everlasting jubilee where they sing, "Glory, and honor, and blessing unto our God, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever"? They died in faith, — in faith in the immortality and future existence of the soul. The body is the mere garment of clay, which one day we shall lay down to be mingled with its parent clay; but the soul is the inhabitant within us, the bright light kindled from the fountain of light, that has a pulse that must beat forever; that lives a life that death cannot interfere with; that has ties and bonds that link it indissolubly to Deity, that neither death, nor disease, nor the grave, shall ever be able to snap asunder. When a Christian dies, there is not the suspension of his own consciousness, even for a moment. At the death of a true Christian, there is no such thing as an interval of insensibility; it is the striking only of the tent in which he tabernacled, and the emerging of the soul, transformed, transfigured, and rising on new and unknown wings toward its lofty dignity, there to dwell forever in the presence of God, in that better country, that true rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Patriarchs, amid their dim shadows, thus lived and thus died. If they so lived and so died, how much happier, nobler, should be our life, who have life and immortality clearly brought to light in the Gospel! Are we living by faith? He that lives by sense has no thought, no feeling, no sympathy, — nothing that he leans on, nothing that he looks for, beyond the range of his senses. A man that lives by sense has such anxious inquiries as these: "What shall I eat? or how shall I reach this honor? How shall I gratify this craving? How shall I satisfy this thirst?" By these limits he is bound.

But he that lives by faith looks beyond this world : and as he gazes on that unsounded eternity into which he feels he must plunge or be precipitated, he asks himself these questions, "What will bear me up there? Whom shall I find there? What shall sustain that new, mysterious, and hidden life? Are my sins forgiven me, without the forgiveness of which I cannot be admitted? Is my heart renewed, without the regeneration of which I cannot be fitted for it?" Thus he lives by faith, and therefore to him his death is but a change of climate, an exchange of houses, the laying aside of the earthly and corruptible, and the entrance into glory, honor, and immortality.

So the patriarchs died, not only in faith in the immortality of the soul, but they died in faith in the resurrection of the body. What did they look for? They looked for a better country, a material one; they looked for a city, a material one; and they looked for the resurrection of the body as vividly as Paul himself looked for it. Even David himself—speaking of Christ, it is true, but speaking in language that belongs to a true believer—says "My flesh shall not see corruption." And, speaking of his child, he shows he must have understood this: "I shall go to him: he shall not come back to me." And so these patriarchs laid down the body of clay, expecting a new one, because they had correctly estimated and measured the latitude and the longitude of that better country into which they were entering. How gently these patriarchs died! Let us read the death of a patriarch, as recorded in the Scriptures,—how quiet, how confiding! They seemed to fall asleep, as the flowers on the approach of winter, which bow their heads quietly, submissively, as if rejoicing in the arrangements of their Father, whether for life or for death. It was the benediction on their life, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And it is written upon the tomb-stones of the patriarchs, legible to the eye of faith,

"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

They thus died in faith, they thus embraced the promises, they thus looked for a better country; because they stood upon that basis which never can be moved, they trusted by faith in that sacrifice which never will disappoint, — "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Is our trust in that sacrifice? Are we in Christ Jesus? There is no promise for any one out of Christ; there are nothing but promises for every one that is in Christ. There is nothing for us if we are strangers to him; there is everything before us if strangers and pilgrims in the world, but followers of Jesus Christ, the Forerunner who is for us entered.

We cannot but notice, in the next place, the perfect unity of faith, and hope, and joy, between the patriarchs of old and Christians now. Christianity is just as old as creation itself. Adam heard it preached amid the ruins of Paradise. Abel saw the blood of Christ reflected in that of the lamb that he slew. Enoch walked with Jesus. Noah beheld him with the rainbow around his head, as the seer saw him in the apocalyptic vision, many thousand years afterwards. Isaiah predicted his sorrow; David sung his praise; Malachi announced his rising. The same faith, the same Gospel, only in different formulas, not so clearly and vividly, but still as truly and as really, was revealed to Abraham and the patriarchs, as it is to us. There never has been but one religion that God has owned. There never has been but one way to heaven, and in it patriarchs and apostles and prophets have walked. It matters not how near we may be to it; if we are not in it, we never can reach heaven. It is not true that all will go to heaven if they only adopt the way that seems to them right. No sincerity on our part can make a truth a lie, or a lie truth. In vain are we told that there is only one way to heaven, if man can get there by many. No ecclesiastic system which

man sincerely accepts will carry him to heaven. If he be not in that one way, however sincere, he is not in the way to joy. A man drinking poison, sincerely believing it to be a precious medicine, does not find it to be a healing balm, but a deadly draught. A blind man, who walks to the edge of a precipice, believing that he is going to a beautiful garden, does not the less fall over and meet with destruction because he believes that he is walking safely. And whatever a man may think, however convinced he may feel, if not in Christ, he is not the less walking in the broad way that leads to destruction, and far from the way that leads to everlasting life.

Such hope as that which the patriarchs cherished, such persuasion as that the patriarchs embraced, become us as often as we approach the table of the Lord. The Jews, when they celebrated the passover, did so each with his staff in his hand, his sandals on his feet, and with his loins girt about, implying that they were ready to go forth to that city to which they looked through the waste howling wilderness that lay between. We too should come to that table as strangers and pilgrims, believing, embracing the promises, commemorating a transaction glorious beyond all expression in the past, and anticipating a hope bright as heaven in the future. "Do this in remembrance of me till I come again." As often, therefore, as we draw near to that holy table, we do say, or at least we ought to say, "We have renounced the world; we have abjured what is sinful, carnal, polluting, unholy, in it; we have left it behind us as Lot left Sodom, as Israel left Egypt; we are in it, our abodes are in it, but our hearts are above and beyond it; as with the exile, our feet are upon the shores of the place of our banishment, but our hearts beat by the hearths and the homes of our fathers. Thus, as true believers, we shall confess, with the patriarchs, before God, that we are pilgrims and strangers; that we are not digging in this earth for a home; that we are not trying to construct a rest out of this

world's best and brightest materials ; but that we are looking for a new genesis to pass upon it, for all things to become new, for sin to be cast out of it, and disloyalty to God expelled from it, and the consecrating touch of our Saviour to restore and re-beautify it. And then we shall be happy on it ; but not because it is so holy, or its landscape so beautiful, or its sky so glorious, but because Christ is there, to be with whom is far better. At a communion table, we not only confess that we are pilgrims and strangers, but also that we are ready to go forth wherever God may be pleased to send us, and to do, as the Israelites professed, whatever duty God may prescribe,—having no will but his, no desire but what he implants, no object or home except what he in his blessed word has pointed out. Let us pray that ours may be the pilgrim's heart and the stranger's spirit. Let us pray that now, whilst we are here, all those ties, and bonds, and vanities, that bind us too much to the earth, may be gradually loosened ; and so, when death comes, it will not be rending and snapping roots intertwined with rock and soil, strong, and become far-grasping with increasing years ; but the gentle falling of the tree already loosened, in order that the spirit, the life that actuated it and gave it all its grandeur, having outgrown it, may be transmitted to a better sphere, there to wait for the resurrection gathering, and the restoration of that body, which, like itself, shall be perfectly pure and holy

CHAPTER IX.

THE CITY OF GOD.

“ Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me !
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy and peace and thee ?

“ When shall mine eyes thy heaven-built walls
And pearly gates behold ?
Thy bulwarks with salvation strong,
And streets of shining gold ?

“ Jerusalem, our happy home,
Our souls still long for thee !
Then shall our labors have an end,
When we thy joys shall see.”

“ For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” — HEBREWS 11 : 10.

ABRAHAM, “ when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out, not knowing whither he went,” having believed God’s word to be true and good. By the same faith “ he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.” Sustained by a brilliant hope, able and adequate to bear all that lay the stress of their joy on it, “ he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

As soon as the earth has emerged from its baptismal fire

and has been reconstructed far more beautiful and better than at first, there shall come down upon it, as we are told in a passage parallel to that which I have selected for consideration, "that city, the new Jerusalem, prepared and adorned like a bride for the bridegroom."

In order to ascertain what this city is for which Abraham looked, let us quote some parallel passages. Paul says in the same Epistle, "He hath prepared for them a city." He states in the thirteenth chapter, "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." He adds in the same Epistle, "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God." Again, in another Epistle, "Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." In the Book of the Revelation, "I will write upon him the name of the city of my God." And again, in the same book, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." And again, "That great city, the holy Jerusalem," a description of which is contained in the whole of the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the Book of the Revelation, a piece of poetry the most magnificent, of prophecy the most consoling, of truth the most instructive. It shall have "on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates;" and the very foundation-stones of it shall be precious stones. "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Now, the universe is the temple of God. Then, God will be the temple of the universe. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it:" for a moral glory shall submerge all physical splendor: "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all

by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it." . . . "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Now, it seems to me that because this expression, city, is so frequently employed in Scripture, it must be more than a simple figure. The epithets and allusions connected with it seem so remarkable, so definite, so distinctly literal, in many of the passages in which they are employed, that I humbly submit it must mean some definite, material realization. It seems to me that the perfect consistency of language, the identity of thought, employed by different writers, in different ages, in different circumstances of trial or of joy,—by Abraham, by David, by Paul, by John,—some in the land of Mesopotamia, or in the strange land, yet the land of promise,—some in Patmos in the Egean Sea,—and the remarkable peculiarity, eloquence, and poetry of their language, indicate that they saw in common one bright actual vision, and that they described what they saw in human speech, pervaded by one guiding element, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. Whilst all this is literally true, there is in it much that is instructive to us, and much that is meant to contrast between that state in which Abraham, and Isaiah, and Paul, and John were, and we now are, and the state in which we shall be when that city comes down from heaven.

Abraham and the patriarchs dwelt in tents, frail, temporary, unfit for permanent residence. Their hope in contrast to this was, a city, glorious, enduring, splendid, full of society. The tent, they were told, should be soon struck, and on their eyes would then flash the spires of a city, that shine in an

unsettling sun, where there is no night. And we, too, may cherish the same hope; for our houses, or homes, in comparison of this city and its many mansions, are but tents. We are accordingly taught, in these beautiful prophecies, that the transient shall soon be lost in the eternal; that the narrow and the strait dwellings shall soon expand into the many mansions of that city that hath foundations; that the tent whose weaver and workman is man shall soon be replaced by the city whose builder and whose maker is God. The frailty of those tents in which we now dwell is meant to impress upon us the lesson that we are pilgrims, strangers in the desert, not at home; and the beauty, and the descriptive glory, and the picturesqueness of that city that is to be, are designed to elevate our hearts from tents that must soon be struck, and to fix them within the walls of "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Soon will all this become actual. The changeable shall give place to the unchangeable, the precarious to that which is stable; fears within and fightings without, to that which is all peace and all security; and the beauty of the vision, and the evanescence of it that now is, to the splendor of a vision that shall not be dimmed or withdrawn for ever and ever.

I may notice, again, that the site of this city is evidently the earth. I have already endeavored to show, as far as the word of God can guide us, that there is no reason to suppose that this world will ever be annihilated. I do not believe that anything that God made will be annihilated. Sin, indeed, shall be utterly expunged from this earth, but God did not make sin. Wherever it came from, however we explain it, it is not God's creature. It is man's curse, but not God's creature. But everything that God made he will reconstitute in more than its pristine glory; and this earth, that has wept and groaned for so many thousand years, that is covered with the *débris* of fallen cities, with the broken

shafts of dismantled columns, with dilapidated and decaying palaces, shall emerge from its baptism of fire, and bear upon its bosom a city that shall have no comparison, and can have no companion, — “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” — in which, as in a vast cathedral, in varying chapels, and in many mansions, but under the same grand roof, God’s re-gathered and redeemed people shall celebrate the praises of their common Lord, in different dialects of the same catholic and everlasting tongue; — a city of the grandeur and quiet beauty of which we can form but a faint conception now; but, hid as I trust we are in the Rock, we may, with Moses, see some stray beams of its approaching magnificence, to be to us an earnest and a foretaste of it.

The third idea of this city, and inherent in it, is that of safety. When Cain ran from the presence of God, he went to build cities, or places of refuge. He felt that he was beneath a curse, and therefore he sought in a city raised by his own hands a protecting power. Lot, when he fled from Sodom, went to Zoar, a little city. The Israelites had in their minds cities associated with the idea of safety; for the six cities of refuge were the great places of safety for the accidental manslayer. When Abraham looked forward to a city, though, I admit, prior in time to the cities of refuge, he looked forward to some sheltered and sequestered nook, in which he would be safe from all the storms, and vicissitudes, and changes of mortality, — some spot that, protected by his God, would satisfy the desires of his broken heart, and yield a resting-place for the soles of his feet. And who does not feel some such desire still? Earth’s brilliancy fades, the longer that we look upon it. Earth’s light becomes darker, the longer that it shines. Men become less sensitive as they grow older, and less capable of impression. Changes, vicissitudes, bereavements, losses, pursue us, and track our foot-

steps at every turn that we take. It is, therefore, one of the instinctive yearnings of the human heart, only consistent in a Christian heart, to long and look for a home; a city that hath foundations, into which no thief shall break to steal, in which there shall be no night, nor sorrow, nor crying; but all former things shall have passed away.

A city suggests the idea of society. The future state, whatever be its material characteristics, shall be a social state. It shall be no solitary, no sequestered spot, where we shall be alone. The everlasting anthem of the blessed will not be a solo; it will be a grand and mighty chorus. The manifested and splendid company there will be the company of the sons of God. There will not be a single solitary there; but the salutations of responsive hearts, the reciprocities of renewed friendship, the communion of redeemed saints. In that city there will be no monk's cell. Amid its inhabitants there will be no anchorite or hermit. There will be there no dim religious light, but a splendor so vivid that it will put out sun, and moon, and stars; there shall be no night, but there shall be many multitudes, that no man can number, of worshipping, redeemed saints. There will be society.

The idea of a city brings before us the thought of unity; and the apostle Paul, when he wrote to the Ephesians, evidently had this thought before him, when he told the Christians there, "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." There will therefore be, in that city which is to come, perfect unity. The law will be love. The light of that land will be truth

There will be all colors, all complexions, all climes, among the citizens. There will be but one heart, one Lord, one baptism, one faith, one God and one father of all. There will be many mansions, but all its inmates will be at peace with each other. There will be many tongues, but they will all be burdened with one grand anthem. The ancient patriarch, that saw dimly and from afar the advent of Jesus, the "light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel;" the evangelist that wrote of Jesus, and the apostle that walked with him upon the streets of Jerusalem, and heard those words that man never spake; the martyr taught by him to suffer, "whom having not seen he loved, and in whom, though seeing him not, he believed and rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" the slain babes of Bethlehem, and the gathered flowers of the nineteenth century, — shall all meet in that blessed brotherhood, joining in one grand song, the key-note, the commencement and close of which is, Christ that redeemed them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and that made them kings and priests unto our God. Not unison will be there, but harmony; not uniformity will be there which man can create from without, but that living unity which melts into one all the complexities and varieties of human character and human joy. A city, therefore, under one governor, constituting one people, suggests the idea of unity as the characteristic of the state which we hope for.

Another idea suggested to us is Catholicity.

The church is catholic now, but in promise only, not in fact. There is no sect, or party, or communion upon earth, that can justly and truly assume to itself the prerogative of catholic. No one branch of the church of Christ can say, All men are my subjects, all human beings are converts to my creed, are comprehended within my pale, and are members of my communion. The church of the Lord Jesus now is catholic in this sense, that it is fitted for all nations, that it can spread

in all climes, that it can enlighten all minds, that it can convert all hearts, and save all sinners of every rank, degree and country, in the universe. But catholic, in the sense that all are actually members of it and in it, it is not. If we were to say so, China and India, with their hundreds of millions, would rise and say, It is not true; and millions more of Mahometans would say, It is not true. But a day comes when this city shall come down "from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;" and when in that city shall be gathered all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues; and one great sea of light and life shall submerge all heights, and fill up all depths; all hearts shall be concord, all tongues shall be praise; and the bright idea of a catholic church, caricatured by some, anticipated prematurely by others, will then be realized; for the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge and covered with the glory of God.

Another idea evidently suggested here is that of Dignity. We may say of this city, if we be destined to enter it, We are citizens of no mean city. Every inmate of it will feel so, and yet none will be proud. Every inhabitant of that city will have no conceit, but he will have a sense of his grandeur, and a corresponding gratitude as the offering that he renders for the enjoyment of it. That passion in the human bosom called ambition, which thirsts for honors, — which cleaves, often sinfully, to power, — which, personated in the biography of a Napoleon, waded through rivers of blood, and marched with dread tramp over the walls of smouldering and burning capitals, — in its original was good, is in its purity part of the primeval furniture of the human soul, is in man's perversion of it a curse, but was meant to be, in God's creation of it, a grand blessing. Why does God promise to his people sovereignty? why promise to them dignity? why invest them at first with dominion, and tell them that they shall have the dominion restored again? Is not this fuel; is not this food for a pas-

sion which in its debasement and corruption has been the most fatal to mankind; but which in its primeval constitution and in its restored state shall be a fit resident in the very chancel of the sanctified heart of humanity? God speaks in his word to all the affections and feelings and hopes that constituted the original soul of man. He speaks not to one individual, or to one peculiar temperament. He speaks to the heart of all humanity; and whatever pure and noble affection God created in Paradise, or whatever pure and noble affection God has re-created, or replanted from Calvary, shall find its food and its nutriment in that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." We shall have the dignity of kings, the sacredness of priests, the sovereignty of a kingdom, the solemnity of a temple; and God himself, our Saviour, shall be the glory in the midst of us. Dignity, then, is inseparable from the idea of such a city.

Another thought suggested, too, by this great prospect for which Abraham looked, is perfect beauty, moral and physical. Let us read the twenty-first and twenty second chapters of Revelation at leisure, and they will show that God has, if I may use the expression, emptied heaven and earth of their richest imagery, and gathered from all their provinces whatsoever is beautiful and splendid, in order to set forth the glory of that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Just as the moral glory of that city shall make the sun and the moon grow pale, so I believe there is a moral beauty, — that beauty which the psalmist says belongs to the king's daughter, that is, the true church of Christ, who is said to be all glorious within, — which characterizes the redeemed souls and the resurrection bodies of the people of God, that will make pale and dim, in comparison, the beauty of the heavens, and the lustre of the earth. Those flowers that appear so beautiful now, which the fallen earth sends forth in summer as a specimen of what she can do, — which she draws

back again into her bosom in winter, as if to tell us, This is not the time yet, — these flowers, so fragrant and so beautiful, are but earnest of those that shall grow in the Paradise of our God. The beautiful and precious stones and brilliant gems, which are to be the foundations of the new Jerusalem, are, in their present state, but the exploded fragments of that great earthquake that shook Paradise of old, and scattered it in fragments over all the earth. Those that now are so valued are but dim earnest of the stones of the walls and pavement of that city whose walls will be salvation, whose gates will be praise. All that the earth's material bosom can now bear, all that the mines of the earth can now yield, are as nothing compared with the material magnificence described in the book of the Apocalypse. More of beauty and of joy shall be given to the least saint then to have, than the greatest seraph can now express. It is the place of perfect beauty. The eye is now delighted with what is beautiful; the ear with what is harmony; the heart with what is lovely. It will then be perfectly so. I rejoice in thinking that matter is not to be the monopoly of the devil forever. I delight in the thought that Satan is a usurper, that he has no right to be here, that God himself has taken the earth for his own, and his own it will be; and the idea of the perfect man, of the perfect creation, will yet be realized. Much have I been struck by reading the remarkable discovery that the earth has undergone changes in the past which indicate and are fore-shadows of a grand last transformation yet to be. When this takes place, the blasted wilderness shall rejoice, and the solitary desert shall blossom as the rose. I accept this promise literally, and why should I not? God has said it. Show me a more excellent interpretation. I know of no more excellent one; and whenever the literal meaning of God's word does not involve absurdity, or contradict itself, I regard it as the true one.

The next idea suggested to us by such a city coming down upon the earth is that of perfect reünion of all the people of God, — the re-meeting and reünion of all the people of God. In that city they that were one in Christ, but never, from distance or seas that flowed between, met together upon earth, shall meet and mingle. They who felt and mingled in the cares, the toils, the anxieties, the griefs, the problems, domestic, social and national, in this dispensation, having met in Christ by faith, shall then meet together in fact. Dear relatives, whose last meeting was the death-bed, whose last looks were tears, shall there meet and recognize each other. The wounds that bereavement has left are not the only wounds that are to be unhealed forever. The blanks that death has made, when the strong spoiler entered the fireside, and took away the gem that shone most brightly beside it, are not to be left unfilled forever. We shall not only meet, but recognize them that we meet. It was a promise, that we shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; and shall they that sit down not know that the promise is fulfilled, by seeing Abraham and Isaac and Jacob with them? I believe that the recognition of the saints in their redeemed state is just as great a truth as the resurrection of the bodies of the saints from the graves where they now are. The great promise he gives is a great and magnificent incentive for the saints to press thitherward. There we shall see Jesus, the elder brother; and — blessed thought! — we shall meet also those who have preceded us in Christ. Some men have the largest portion of their family in the regions of the blessed, while they have only the mere wreck of their household upon earth, as if to teach them, This is not your rest, it is to come; the greater part of your family is basking in the sunshine of glory; hasten there to join them.

But there is a grand characteristic of this city, which is, perhaps, more expressive than any other. The apostle Paul,

in the Epistle to the Hebrews, calls it "the city of God;" — and again, he calls it "the city of the living God." There are two great cities constantly mentioned in the Apocalypse, which I have often referred to. There are two great churches there are two great individuals, — the Lamb's wife and the woman that sits upon the seven hills. So there are but two cities: one, Babylon the great mystery, that is to be cast into the lake of fire, never to be reformed; for, while we must not forget that individual Romanists may be converted, — and so let us try to convert them, — we must see that the system itself is to be utterly blasted, as a dreadful and horrible thing, over which, as the corrupter of truth, God has pronounced his most righteous anathema. There is another, — the city of the Prince of peace, whose walls are salvation, whose gates are praise, — in which nothing that defileth shall be allowed to enter; a city that grows, not out of the earth like a tree, earth-sprung and earthly in its texture, but "that cometh down from heaven," even from God, heavenly in its character and holy in its texture. But it is not only called the city of God; it is called by the apostle, in that remarkable description in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "the city of the living God." The allusion is vastly expressive. All the cities of the heathen invariably had the name of some heathen god. Thus, Athens was the city of Minerva. Rome was the city of Mars. Mars and Minerva had both lived, but were canonized and numbered among the *δαίμονες* — hero-gods — with which they peopled the heavens. Minerva was the patron of the city of Athens, Mars was the patron of the city of Rome. These were the cities of dead men; but this city for which Abraham looked is the city of God, and the city, it is added, of the living God. It has in it living men, living hearts; it is a living truth, it has for its king the living God. Truly did the Psalmist say, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, city of God." Truly does he say, "Beautiful in sit

uation, the glory of the whole earth, is Mount Sion, the city of the great King." Beautiful as was ancient Jerusalem, it was only the mirror that reflected to the psalmist's eye the richer splendor of that Jerusalem which is above, which shall come down from heaven, and which shall appear on earth, the city of the great King. The more our faith fastens and feeds on Christ, the more peace and confidence we shall have; and the more our hope enters into this city, walks through its streets, surveys its glorious mansions, listens to the anthems of its sublime temple, and beholds the trail of the glory of the great King, who walks its streets, and is worshipped on its high altar, the more shall we say, "O that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and there be at rest!" I believe that one of the great reasons why earthly things have such a grasp of us is, because we deal so little with heavenly things. We need not be told that the only way to displace that which is inferior is to bring to bear upon it something that is superior. If I want to put down in the heart some inferior passion, let me bring a superior one in juxtaposition with it. When the sun shines upon the grate, it very soon puts out the brightest fire; and so, when a very bright object is brought to bear upon the human heart, it makes look pale all human objects beside. I think, then, that the great design of God, in giving so much nutriment to hope and so much footing to faith in the Bible, is to charm and captivate the human heart in its purest and most sublime condition, so that man shall count all common things that he now sees but dross, in comparison of the excellency of those things that are yet below the horizon, but that will soon come within it, even "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

This estate for which Abraham looked is an eternal one; it lasts forever. We cannot build a house, however beautiful, on earth, and say, Here I will live one year, ten, twenty, thirty. So may we word the lease; but God, the superior, has

not worded it so; he reserves in his own hand when, where and how to separate the house from the householder. There is no estate upon earth, the loveliest that the eye sees, the brightest that the sunbeams play upon, concerning which I can say, Here I will live forever. Even in the marriage ceremony death is mentioned. Even in the closest relations that we have, separation is felt to be a possibility, — by thousands a probability. But in this bright city there are no graves, no sick beds, no bleeding hearts, or broken spirits; no fears about to-morrow, no fightings about to-day; no quarrels, no disputes; all is serenity, joy, peace. The vision is not one of which we shall only see the parting splendor. The exhibition here is not one that we shall be too late to witness. The sweet strain is not one of which we shall hear only the last note. It will be an everlasting morning, it will be an unfading spring, it will be an unwaning sun, an ever-joyous harmony. There are no hands upon the clock of eternity; there is no shadow upon its dial. The very hours of heaven will be measured by sunshine, and not by shadow. Our very words will be music; our very life will be a perpetual hymn.

This is the city that man has, even in his unregenerate state, some presentiments of. What is meant by a revolution, when a whole nation explodes in some fitful and terrific passion? It is poor humanity groaning under its burden, having a dim presentiment of something great and grand reserved for it; and having never heard that the bright vision, the great ideal, is not in this dispensation, but is to be actualized in that city only that cometh down in the last days, for which Abraham looked, which John depicted, whose builder and whose maker is God, it rushes into wickedness, rebellion and crime.

Such, then, are some of the ideas suggested by the prospect of a city.

Let us see here the unity of the patriarchal and the Christian hope. Abraham looked for the same city that John

looked for and saw from Patmos. Abraham's hope and mine are perfectly one ; Abraham's faith and mine are in perfect identity. Abraham's way to the city was the same that I trust I walk in. The entrance to Abraham's city is the same faith by which we walk. And the humblest saint on the earth can say just what Abraham could say, and in one voice, "Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, that entereth within the vail." There is but one grand communion from the fall of Adam to the second advent of Christ, a communion varied in its outward developments, the same in all its essential and blessed characteristics. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Isaiah, Malachi, John the Baptist, Paul the apostle, Mark the evangelist, Martin Luther, Latimer, Ridley, John Knox, with all his faults, and the last Christian man that fell asleep in Jesus, — we are all fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the same household of faith. If we saw and felt it as we ought, we should not regard the little distinctions that sever Christians so often, — distinctions without differences, — but look on the great characteristics that we have in common as alone worthy of thanking God for.

The second lesson that we learn is, that the communion of saints, that communion of saints which is spoken of in the old creed, called the Apostles' Creed, is not a fancy, but a truth. I have been told that I do not believe in the communion of saints. It has been said so in a celebrated letter lately published.* Now, I do hold the communion of saints most heartily. The real truth is, that we do not believe questionable men ought to be canonized ; or that, suppositiously canonized, they ought to be invoked. I call this the worship of saints. What I believe is the communion of saints. But it may be asked, What is this communion of saints ? It means, that all true Christians have the same holy feelings ; that they belong to the same

* See Rev. Mr. Bennet's Letter to Lord John Russell

great company ; that some are arrived, like Abraham, at the city that hath foundations ; that others are on the road, with their faces thitherward ; that some have their souls in the city ; and a very few, like Enoch, and Elijah, and probably Moses, have their souls and their bodies in the same city ; and most of us have relations and friends in that city ; and all of us, if Christians, have our citizenship, and our heart and treasure, in it. No man is a true Christian, unless he has either a foot in it or his heart in it. Abraham's foot treads its golden streets. Our hearts, if children of God, beat and palpitate in the presence of God, even while passing through much tribulation in the world here below. Communion of saints is not worshipping dead men, or men alive and happy. It means our all eating of the fruit of the same tree of life, our all drinking of the water of the same holy stream, our all looking forward to the same bright city. They who are in the city have emblazoned on their faces what they who are travelling to it have written upon their hearts, "Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God."

If we are on the road to this city that hath foundations, we shall feel that we are pilgrims and strangers ; for what is said of Abraham and others, in this respect ? "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them ;" and what was the evidence that they did so ? — here is the practical and personal lesson for us. He says, "They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. But what ! Can that man of great wealth, that person of great rank, be called a pilgrim ? Can any person who has a good income and a comfortable house, and who is well clothed, be called a pilgrim ? It is not the pilgrim's habit that makes the pilgrim, but the pilgrim's heart. There may be as great insulation from the world and its wickedness in a palace, as there is in the meanest and humblest hut, It is not the staff

in the hand, nor the sandal on the foot, but it is faith love and spirituality in the heart, that make a man a pilgrim, with Abraham, looking for a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Kingly hearts have belonged to beggars, and kingly hearts make kingly robes. So royal ones are pilgrims, and wear pilgrim robes, manfully fighting the good fight against the world, against sin, and sitting loose to its dearest things, and looking with a holy apathy upon its brightest things, having their heart, their treasure, their hopes, in a city that hath foundations. This is to be a pilgrim. God sees such to be so, whether they live in the noblest hall, or beg by the wayside, or sweep the crossing for the passer-by.

And, in the last place, how zealously should we guard the way that leads to this city! In ancient times, it was the chief and ceaseless effort of nations to keep their well-springs safe. In the land of Palestine it was a great sin not to keep the way open to the cities of refuge, or to obstruct any one on the road to them. Rome had roads running from that city to the ends of the world, and one of their greatest cares was to guard or defend them. Ours is a kindred duty. We ought, if we be true, to point out to the people, as ministers of the Gospel, that this is the way, and say, Walk ye in it. Take care that you are not walking in the wrong road, which leads to the city that is to be destroyed. See that you are walking in the right road, to the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The road that leads to the one is paved with penances, and confessions, and sufferings, and imaginary merits, and absolutions, and priestly pretensions; but the way that leads to the true city is Christ alone, — "I am the way." . . . "No man cometh to the Father but by me." This is "the way, the truth and the life;" and he that walks in this way, whether he worship in a cathedral or a chapel, whether he be called this or that, is in the way that leads to the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is

God." Let us ever keep our Bibles open, and let no man shut them; for they are the maps of the city, the charts of the way. Let us keep our communion with heaven open at any sacrifice. May the Holy Spirit teach and instruct us, and imprint these bright hopes upon our hearts, and enable us, with growing strength, to advance in this holy and happy way till at last we meet in that city which hath foundations; and having often met on earth amid infirmities and sins, may we meet there in perfection of soul and body, through Jesus Christ, to whom be all honor and glory forever! Amen.

CHAPTER X.

PRESENT PRIVILEGES.

“ The past and present here unite,
Beneath time’s flowing tide ;
Like foot-prints hidden by a brook,
And seen on either side.

“ She reads to them, at eventide,
Of One who came to save ;
To cast the captive’s chains aside,
And liberate the slave.

“ And oft the blessed time foretells
When all men shall be free ;
And musical as silver bells
Their falling chains shall be.”

“ For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words ; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart : and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake) : but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.”—HEB. 12 : 18—24.

THE passage of Scripture prefixed to this chapter is extremely expressive and beautiful. The first four verses

present a miniature of the law, and of man under the law. The last three verses embody the very essence of the Gospel, and present a miniature, if I may again use that expression, of man under the Gospel. We see, in the first four verses, man trying laboriously, but in vain, to climb to heaven by Mount Sinai. We have, in the three last verses, man under a new impulse ascending to glory by Mount Calvary. In the first four verses we see the creature most mistaken, but most sincerely persuaded, that by deeds of law he can be justified; and in the last three verses, the creature satisfied, after the failure of the experiment, that by deeds of law he never can be justified, and that only in the blood of Christ is there remission and forgiveness of sins. Sinai is compressed into the picture made up of the four first verses. Calvary, Gethsemane, and Sion, are sketched in the three last verses. The contrast is complete; it is instructive also. Let us study the portrait, and may the Spirit of God help us to profit by it!

In the eighteenth verse we see man in contact with Sinai, and with God the righteous Judge. The apostle, indeed, says, "Ye are not come unto it;" but in describing the negative he shows what the positive is. In his declaration of what is not, he plainly indicates what was, namely, man in contact with Sinai and with God the righteous Judge. But he delineates, not only Sinai and the *righteous* Judge, but the *offended* Judge; for Mount Sinai "burned with fire," in order thereby to indicate the presence of tribulation, and wrath, and anguish, upon every creature that doeth evil. Beside all this, we see also the state of the minds of those who are gathered round that Mount Sinai, or, translated into plain terms, that seek to be justified by the law—they are filled with "blackness, and darkness, and tempest;" that is, ever as man looks for a crevice in God's law through which he can creep to heaven, or gropes for something that

he has done or suffered, on which and by which he can lift himself to God, his mental condition is, what every one who has made the experiment has felt, "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," or a sense of and fearful looking for the descent of that fiery indignation that crowned the mountain-top, and that still awaits every soul that doeth evil. But this is not the whole of the awful portrait. While the mountain "burned with fire," and the minds of those who were near it were filled with "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," there was heard, also, "the sound of a trumpet," compelling their presence. At the resurrection of the dead the trumpet shall sound, and not one shall be able to disobey it. So at Mount Sinai the trumpet sounded, and not one who risked the experiment of seeking to be justified by a way which God has not provided in the Gospel was able to refuse or disobey. There are but two plans by which man can try to get to heaven: either that of attempting to be saved by what he is and what he has done; or that of seeking to be saved in spite of what he is, and what he has done or deserved or suffered, that is, by the righteousness and merits of the Son of God. Man may and does often try to compromise the difference, and to intermingle these opposite and conflicting principles. But compromise here is concession of the truth, and our selection of one. We cannot mix the two. We must humble ourselves to be saved only by grace, or we must make the experiment, — disguise it, modify it, soften it as we please, — of attempting to be saved just by what we have done. Then, if any refuse to be saved by grace, the trumpet will summon such to answer for the deeds done in the body, and to see in his own ruin the result of the tremendous experiment, whether man can be saved by what man has done, or not.

There was not only "the sound of a trumpet," but "the voice of words." What words? A condemning law. "Thou

shalt love, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not kill." These are "the voice of words." And of what does this voice convince every man that hears it? "I have done those things I ought not to have done, and I have left undone those things I ought to have done." What is all this but the echo in the heart of man of "the voice of words," sounding from Mount Sinai?

"The voice of words" was so terrible that the people begged that they might not hear it any more: "Which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: for they could not endure that which was commanded." In other words, they could not bear it. Man, with a conscience within, consciously guilty, accusing, and its accusations outnumbering its excuses, cannot bear to hear God's condemning law. Hence it comes to pass, that wherever the Gospel is preached every man that hears it either must retire and leave the spot because he cannot bear it, or he must surrender and accept the Saviour, and live. There is no alternative. Every man that hears the Gospel must either shut his ears, or lock his senses in vacancy, or retire from the place that he occupies; or he must capitulate, — glorious capitulation! — accept Christ as all his righteousness, all his salvation, and all his desire. Hence the people at the foot of Mount Sinai, seeking to be justified by obedience to its rescripts, felt that condemning voice to be so terrific, so oppressive, and so intolerable, that they entreated, as the only mercy that they could expect, that he would not speak to them any more. They could not bear it. It was the very sound of the footsteps of nearing death. So terrible was this, that "if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart." If an innocent animal, that has partaken only of the indirect effects of man's sin, could not be allowed to touch that holy mount, how much less shall

a guilty man be allowed to touch it, or hope to be justified by any obedience he has rendered to its solemn rescripts !

It is added, too, that "so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." How expressive is this ! If he who was the meekest of men, the special favorite of God, selected in a subordinate sense to be a mediator and an ambassador from God, — if even Moses could not stand the sight, nor climb the mount, nor hear the words, nor behold the blazing fire that crowned its summit, without trembling and quaking, how much less shall we be able to hear it ! Surely there is little hope for us, if there was none for Moses. Truly, if thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, who can stand ? Not Moses, not Abraham, not the sainted martyr, not the faithful apostle, not the holy evangelist ; for it is written, "By deeds of law no flesh can be justified in his sight."

Such is a picture of law. The innocent animal creation is seen shrinking from the awful spectacle, and the meek, the eloquent Moses, quaking and trembling beside it. All creation is thus in its present state brought in as guilty, and the great thought is impressed upon its inmost heart, There is no approach to heaven by that mount ; there is no acceptance for a single soul, as it is by nature, in the sight of that God who is throned upon it ; all is fear within, and fighting without, and the blazing fire above, and the bleak desert around, and a retreat or refuge nowhere, — "our God is a consuming fire."

But this is not our state by grace. Blessed be God, "we are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant."

Let us mark well the contrast. Under the dispensation of law it was Mount Sinai, the darkness at its base, and the fire upon its summit; now, Mount Sion, on which is the temple, where are the glory, the mercy-seat, the overshadowing cherubim, access for the sinful, because there is sacrifice, and through that sacrifice the forgiveness of sin. In the former case, we are forbidden, even the most innocent, so much as to touch the mount. In the present, we are welcome to climb the mount, to rise to and rest upon its summit, and bask in its sunshine, with the deep and joyful sense that there God meets us, and that there we meet God, and that no enmity exists between, above, or below. In the former state, we were justly represented as in the bleak desert, without organization or communion of any sort; now, we are come unto God, to a city—the place of association, the scene of joyous company, where the reciprocities that beautify and gladden social life are exchanged, and where is provided every defence that renders life secure; not a solitary mount, which we must climb alone, but Mount Sion, on which there is “the city of the living God,” in which we find ourselves fellow-citizens with the saints, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. In the former case we were under the shadow of Mount Sinai, the region of wrath, and amid the crashing blasts of the trumpet, and the voice of words, and the light of the blazing fire. Now, as believers, we are come to Jerusalem, the vision of peace, the city of peace, “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” the place where all is harmony, the communion where all is peace, the society whose air is blessedness, the city whose gates are perpetual praise, and its walls salvation. Formerly, we were under the law, angels our enemies, coming down to execute God’s judgments against us. Now, that we have been translated into Christ, brought unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, angels are ministering servants to us, and to all who are the heirs of everlasting salva-

tion. Formerly, fallen spirits, the angels that kept not their first estate, were our only company. Now, the angels that minister before the throne feel they are clothed with the most majestic dignity, and engaged in the most delightful and beneficent errands, when they minister from the Almighty to the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. Formerly, we were as sheep without a shepherd, wandering in the desert, a prey to the wolf, and without a fold. Now, we are come "to the general assembly and church of the first-born." Now, we are gathered into communion and fellowship, joining together in acts of praise and service, and in every exercise that can build us up in our most holy faith, and comfort and refresh each other in our pilgrimage to glory. We now are in the number of those who have been consecrated kings and priests unto God, who have been set apart by the Holy Spirit to be servants of God, to cherish superior and grand hopes, to be members of the "general assembly and church of the first-born," whose names "are written in heaven." Our names once were written upon earth, rarely in praise, and often in scorn; but now that we are translated from Mount Sinai that blazed with fire, and that might not be approached, to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the general assembly and church of the first-born, we discover that our names are written where no calumny can cloud them, and no aggression can expunge them, in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And we are come, not only to these, but "to God, the judge of all." No more are we come to God on Sinai, but to God on Mount Sion; no more to God a judge to condemn us, but to God still a judge, but rejoicing to acquit us. One of the most sustaining apprehensions of God is, that in Christ it is as just in God to pardon and to make happy the believer as it was just in God to condemn an unbelieving sinner, and leave him unhappy forever. God is as just in acquitting one

who believes in Jesus, as he ever was, or can be, in the condemning of a sinner that rejects Jesus. God is not merely merciful to forgive us, but he is faithful and just to forgive us. When we draw near to him in prayer, we draw near to him as children to a father,—a fact most true, most beautiful, most precious; but we also draw near to God as a judge, but not a judge condemning us, but a judge absolving us; around whom not the blazing flames of Sinai meet and mingle to constitute the consuming fire, but mercy and truth, like bright beams, have embraced, and righteousness and justice have kissed and met with each other, and constitute the glory—the true Shechinah, that endures forever. We are thus, then, come to God the judge, looking at us, however, not as we are in ourselves. If God were to determine our everlasting destiny by the prayers and the praises which we offer Sabbath after Sabbath, we should be cut off forever; but he looks at us as members of his Son, as washed in his blood and arrayed in his righteousness; and therefore, as without spot, or blemish, or wrinkle—a glorious church in his sight. It is to be feared that we have never yet fully apprehended the magnificence of that translation which the children of God experience upon earth. We have no right or sufficiently lofty views of the grandeur of our standing in Christ Jesus. We are looked upon by God in no respect as we are in Adam, but in all respects as we are in Christ: so that God can no more (and I speak it with the deepest reverence) cast off the humblest believer in Jesus, than he can cast down his everlasting throne. We are accepted in the beloved, we are safe in the beloved, we are justified and acquitted in the beloved. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the youngest child or the oldest saint in Christ shall never be removed. Blessed be that God that has revealed this grand truth, this precious hope, this sure footing, for us sinners!

Under the law our companions were, not only fallen angels,

but the spirits of lost men. We are now admitted "to the spirits of just men made perfect." This is that beautiful thought which is expressed in the ancient creed, called "the communion of saints." It is a forelight of the future joy. There is no such thing as one church upon earth and another church in heaven. Both believers on earth and believers in glory constitute one church. We Christians on earth are in the vestibule, they Christians in glory are in the house not made with hands. We are in the outer court worshipping without, they are in the inner court praising and adoring within. They drink of the fountain at the fountain-head, we drink of its streams after they have issued from the fountain and made glad the city of God. They may see us, and know us, and be acquainted with many of our ways; this is perfectly possible — at least, there is nothing unscriptural in this. The friends that have preceded us to their eternal homes may be far nearer to us at this moment than our relatives in the north of India, or on the continent of Europe, or in our own land. We know not what may be the thinness of that partition which separates the church below from the church above. It may be so thin that to them it is transparent. The sounds of our praise below may have their echoes amid the choirs of the blessed above. We are come "to the spirits of just men made perfect."

It is added, "to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant." Under the law there was no way open to God. By nature, by deeds of law, there was no acceptance before God. But Jesus, the mediator, interposes; he finds a group filled with darkness and dismay at the bottom of the mount, entreating that they should not hear God's condemning law any more, for they cannot bear it — they are struck dumb by the blaze of that flame — paralyzed, depressed, crushed, by the terrors of that spectacle; and he becomes to them a mediator, the grand pathway stretching from Mount Sinai, where all is

blackness, darkness and tempest, unto Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, where all is acquittal, light, happiness, joy, forever. Jesus is thus the medium of transit from a state of condemnation to a state of acceptance and acquittal before God. He is "the way, the truth, and the life." He says, "No man can come to the Father," or, if I may vary the words, no man can come from Mount Sinai to Mount Sion; from "the voice of words," that condemns, to the voice of the Gospel, that acquits; from the "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," to light, happiness, and sunshine, — whatever may be his character and claims, except by one way, so broad, indeed, that the very greatest sinner may walk in it, but so holy that the least sin cannot be tolerated in it. In the great gulf between, not one trembling sinner around Mount Sinai need plunge, not one desponding sinner amid the "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," need perish. There is a way of escape open; and if it is not found, or is forsaken by any, it is not because God's mercy is inadequate, or the way too difficult, but because man's unbelief and suspicion overpower and fix him where he is. Jesus is the only mediator "of the new covenant;" that is, the covenant made with us in Christ. The Jew made the transition from condemnation, as in the case of Moses and of Abraham, by the same mediator, but through material symbols, signs, and ceremonies. They caught glimpses of the mediator in laborious rites, oppressive ceremonies and ordinances, and under a yoke that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. All the difference between them and us is this, — that we walk in Christ as he is, and they walked in Christ as set forth in ceremonies. These were as crutches, sometimes very heavy, sometimes auxiliary, and always meant to make way and stimulate desire for a brighter and a better day. In our case these are all swept away. Man now sees God the Father face to face. The sinner comes into contact with the Saviour

just as the Saviour is. We need no other sacrifice than that of Christ. There is no need of sacrifices of bullocks, nor of lambs, nor of goats. Christ has set himself forth in the place of all, superseding all by his presence, and from his value dispensing with all, as unnecessary and useless. Here, then, we see Christ, the connecting link between the mount that burned with fire and the mount that glows with perpetual sunshine; the connecting path between the law, where we are utterly condemned, and God in the Gospel, by whom we are gloriously acquitted. That pathway stretches from the earth to the skies, and down it the chimes of God's own voice perpetually come: "Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven, whose iniquities are covered, to whom the Lord imputeth no transgression." On this way, and on that place, we can read inscribed the fifty-third of Isaiah. Amid the company upon that happy mount, to whom we are come, "the spirits of just men made perfect," we may see, not the members of a party, the offspring of a sect; but all such as have washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb, and, therefore, are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night.

But we come not only "to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant," but, in words replete with rich and inexhaustible consolation, "to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The blood of Jesus is eloquent; it speaks from heaven; its advocacy rises from the earth. This is not the blood of Abel that was shed by Cain, for such is not the contrast. Abel's blood, shed by Cain, cried for vengeance. Christ's blood, shed as a victim's, cries for mercy. It would be no contrast to say that Christ's blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel shed by Cain. Abel's did not speak good things at all; it spake and pleaded only for vengeance. But the blood here evidently alluded to is the blood shed by Abel; not the blood of Abel shed by Cain, but the blood of

the lamb slain by Abel and offered as a sacrifice, because a symbol of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. The contrast, then, is between good and better. Abel's blood, that is, the blood of his lamb, spake good things; but the blood of Christ "speaketh better things." Abel's was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Behold the Lamb of God." Christ's was the voice of that blood which tells us, "In Christ we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Abel's sacrifice was a type, that presented a certain dim light. Christ's sacrifice is the substance; and when the substance is come, the shadow is done away with. Abel's sacrifice was offered, as was his habit, many times, and it could never take away sins. Christ's sacrifice is offered once for all, and it takes away the sins of all that believe. Abel's sacrifice was offered for himself. Christ's sacrifice was offered for all that believe, even to the end of the world. And, therefore, Christ's sacrifice reveals a better hope, a better country, a better testimony; — it is a better sacrifice. The whole of the Old Testament Scripture is the voice of Abel's blood. The whole of the New Testament Scripture is the better things of the blood of Jesus. Abel's pointed to the same sacrifice which Christ is, but faintly, imperfectly, and dimly. But what are some of the better things that the blood of Christ speaks to us? Are we afar off? We are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Are we condemned? We are justified by his blood. Are we enemies? We are "reconciled by his blood." Is there a "fearful looking for of judgment?" Our hearts are "sprinkled from an evil conscience" by his blood. Are we strangers? We "have boldness of access and confidence" by his blood. Are we sold to Satan? We are "purchased by his blood." Are we liable to defeat? We "overcome by the blood of the Lamb." David could say, "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine;" but the believer can say, "All things are mine, life and death, past and present,

for Christ is mine, and Christ is God's." Truly the blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel.

It is just this realization of the preciousness of Jesus' atoning blood that can give us peace. If we review even the last few months we have spent in pursuit or expectation of peace and happiness, we shall find only broken cisterns without water, and feel ourselves bitterly disappointed ; but if we can look to the blood of Jesus, and hear it speaking in the depths of our consciences, overpowering all accusing accents by these precious words, " My blood cleanseth from all sin," then shall we feel how much better things than those indicated by the blood of Abel the blood of Jesus speaks. No other voice in the height, or in the depth, can give peace ; the voice of that blood alone has power. No speaking, no washing with water, by any priest, or in any rite, or any ceremony, can give any peace ; the blood of Jesus only can. The hand of the minister can sprinkle the babe's brow with water ; but it is the Spirit of God sprinkling the babe's heart with the blood of Jesus, that gives that babe a new heart, and its conscience, when that conscience is sensitive, happiness and peace. We need nothing additional to this atoning sacrifice, — we can be satisfied with nothing less. What a privileged position is ours ! " Not come are we unto the mount that might be touched, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words ;" but " unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant."

There are a few precious truths deducible from this subject worthy of special attention. We need a deep sense of our demerit, our sins, and guilt in the sight of God, in order to

have true peace. Some may think this is a contradiction, but it is not so. He who has the liveliest sense of acceptance and forgiveness before God, ever has an under-current of the deepest sense of demerit in the sight of God. There is no contradiction between the two. The stability of the one rests on the depth and reality of the other. These live and die together. God will not give inward joy to him who gives not glory to God. Within us, and over our head, by nature, is "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," and there is heard ever ringing in our ears the opposing accents of "the voice of words," that constantly condemns us; but if we cannot silence these, we can hear yet, more musical, and more prevailing still, the voice of the blood of Jesus speaking to us acquittal, acceptance, and no condemnation, to them that are in Christ Jesus. That precious atonement alone is the source of all sense of safety and of joy.

When the angel of destruction passed through Egypt, on that momentous and solemn night on which God had determined to destroy the first-born of Rahab, from the first-born in the palace to the first-born on the dunghill, every Israelite, we are told, took of the blood of sprinkling, — not that the blood of the victim he slew had any moral efficacy whatever, but that it was on his part the exponent of his persuasion of the efficacy of the blood of a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in which was efficacy, through which there was acceptance, and by which there was forgiveness and atonement for his sin, — and he sprinkled that blood upon the threshold, and upon the lintel, and upon the door-posts of his house, and went within and sat still in solemn repose. He knew, because God had told him, that the angel of destruction, upon strong pinion, was to rush along every street, broad and narrow, aristocratic and plebeian, and that he was to penetrate and secure his victim wherever there was no sprinkled blood upon the threshold. The father and the

family on whose threshold was the sacred symbol, as they gathered around that hearth, and in the depth and silence of the midnight heard the rush of the angel's wing, and the wail that burst loud and piercing from the nearest house in the street in which they dwelt, I dare say, trembled and crept closer—the child to its father's knees, and the babe to its mother's bosom; and, it may be, that the strongest believer around that hearth trembled. But, when the angel saw the blood upon the threshold, it mattered not that the faith within was weak, and that the heart was fainting, and that there were suspicion, fear, alarm; the safety of the home was not the confidence of the parent's heart, but the blood that was sprinkled on the threshold of the parent's house. Such is our only happiness, our only confidence still. We have nothing in ourselves we dare trust in, nothing we dare present. But, O, blessed joy! O, glorious conviction! worth a world to have, with which we cannot part, and never will part, for anything that proposes to be a substitute for it; this is our joy, this is our confidence, this is the element of our hope, that the blood of the Lamb is sprinkled upon our hearts, and, because of it, and it alone, no angel of death can scathe, no condemning sentence can smite us; we are accepted in the sight of God, and whatever fear or alarm we feel is alike unwarranted and unavailing. Let us not dishonor God, by suspecting where we ought to confide. He has spoken plainly, and urgently, imploring us to be happy. Let us draw near to the throne of grace, to the baptismal font, to the communion table, with a blessed consciousness that it is to Mount Sion, not to Mount Sinai; not amid "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," but amid brightness, and light, and peace; not amid a blazing fire, which God is to all iniquity, but amid the lights of mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace that kiss each other; not where even Moses, the holiest saint of old, may quake, but where the humblest be-

liever may triumph, with joy unutterable, and full of glory ; not where the lost spirits are, nor where the fallen angels come, but where “ the spirits of just men made perfect ” are, and “ Jesus the Mediator,” ever presenting our prayers, ever the conductor of new blessings to our hearts ; and where is that precious blood of sprinkling, as real as in the case of Israel, but not as visible, for “ faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” — and a throne encompassed with that consecrated circle, surrounded by these glorious bulwarks and defences. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound ! Blessed are the people that are in such a case ! If such, so beautiful, and so consoling, be the mere miniature of the future glory, what must its reality be, that blessed reality in whose songs are no crashes of the trumpet, in whose light is no blackness, in whose air are no tempests, and in whose voices, so much spent in their transit to us in this distant valley, there is no condemning sound !

CHAPTER XI.

THE HEAVENLY VOICE.

“ Shall we grow weary in our watch,
And murmur at the long delay,
Impatient of our Father’s time,
And his appointed way ?

“ Easier to smite with Peter’s sword
Than ‘ watch one hour ’ in humble prayer :
Life’s ‘ great things,’ like the Syrian lord,
Our hearts can do and dare.”

“ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven : whose voice then shook the earth : but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear : for our God is a consuming fire.” — HEBREWS 12 : 25 — 29.

I HAVE explained, in the last chapter, the words that precede the passage quoted at the beginning of this ; namely, we are not come as Christian believers to the foot of Mount Sinai, there to tremble beneath the voice of thunder, to be alarmed by the blaze of the flame that crowned its height, and to feel, — what all have felt who have crowded around that mount, or sought justification by that law, — that by deeds of law no flesh can be justified. This is not our posi-

tion; "we are not come unto the mount that might be touched," that is, the carnal and material mount. We do not expect to be justified by deeds of law; we do not attempt to be so justified. There is in the purest thought that ever flashed through the human mind what condemns the mind that cherished it. There is that in the purest emotion that ever nestled in the noblest age in the holiest heart, which must appear more or less tainted in the sight of a holy God, and which, weighed in the scales of the sanctuary, must be found altogether wanting. Blessed be God! we do not expect thus to be justified; we have no hope or desire of thus being accepted; we "are not come to the mount that might be touched;" we are not under the law, but we are under grace. And therefore, because we are under grace, "we are come unto Mount Sion," which we may climb with joyful hearts and with elastic footsteps. We are come "unto the city of the living God;" that city for which Abraham looked; the "city that hath foundations," "the new Jerusalem;" the vision of peace, not war, that cometh down from a holy heaven, not groweth from a sinful earth. We are come "to an innumerable company of angels;" not fallen angels, longing to possess us, but holy and happy angels, delighting to minister to us. And we are come also "to the general assembly and church of the first-born." Our position is not one of solitude; the Mount Sion is not like Pisgah, a lonely one, crowned by a solitary man; but it has on it a city, and in that city there is seen "the general assembly," or collection, or manifestation of the sons of God and the "church;" that is, the selection, the company of the first-born, kings and priests unto God, whose names are written, — not indeed in the catalogues of earthly renown, but, which is far better, — in the Lamb's Book of Life. And we are come "to God, the Judge of all," whose justice is as truly exhibited in our acquittal, as it would have been exhibited beside Mount Sinai

in our condemnation. "And to the spirits of just men made perfect;" not to one church in heaven and another church upon earth. There is but one catholic church, the company of all saints, "the general assembly and church of the first-born:" a portion of whom are in-door servants, as Howels beautifully calls them; another portion of whom are out-door servants; some within the veil, in the holy place, praising; others, as we are, without the veil, in the outer court, praying; but both looking to the same Saviour, washed in the same blood, accepted in the same name, and constituting one bright and beautiful assembly, clothed with white robes, washed in the blood of the Lamb; and because so clothed, and because so washed, therefore before him, and serving day and night without ceasing. "And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant." Coming to him is coming nearer to one another. The secret of all union in the church of Christ is not diplomacy, not management, not trying to screw down our differences for the nonce, and to develop in contrast our points of coincidence, however useful or however proper that may be; but the secret of true union, sensibly felt, is looking to Christ. The reason of division, discord in the church, is distance from Christ; the secret of harmony in the church is nearness to Christ. If we can suppose a large circumference, or periphery, and in that circle a number of lines all coming from the circumference and meeting in the centre;—these radii, coming from the circumference, approach each other just in proportion as they approach the centre; the nearer they are to the centre, the nearer each is to his fellow; the nearer, to use a more familiar expression, each spoke in the wheel is to its axle, the nearer each is to its fellow-spokes. It is so in the Christian church; the nearer we come to Christ, the nearer we come to each other; and the man who lives most in Christ lives in the highest harmony, in the greatest happiness, in the nearest approximation to

him who is his fellow. Therefore we come "to Jesus," who is "the mediator of the new covenant." And then, as we come nearer to him, his blood speaks. Eloquence belongs to that blood; it speaks now (not it spake once, but it speaks now,) "better things than that of Abel." Not the blood of Abel as shed by Cain,—for there is contrast here,—but the blood of the lamb that was slaughtered by Abel; for it speaks only better things than that,—the same, but better things. Christ's blood speaks. It has an irrepressible eloquence. The reason why the sun shines and the stars twinkle and the winds blow and the sea heaves its gigantic and its restless pulse is just because the blood of Christ pleads. The reason why there is a church upon the earth, and why there is added to it daily such as shall be saved—the reason why there is an outspoken ministry, and a church not overwhelmed by superstition, crushed by persecution, or extinguished by its own delinquencies and infirmities, is because, louder than the seven thunders, louder than all protesting accusations, Christ's blood speaks into the ear of God. It is because of this that we are here. And what a solemn thought! There is not a young man or young woman that reads these words who is not here on this account, that the blood of Christ speaks. If that blood were to be silent, if such were possible, every unrenewed sinner would be instantly cut off. How terrible is the thought that they who are spared through the pleading of atoning blood are they that trample it under foot, and count it an unholy thing!

But I will not suppose so. I will try to suppose the very opposite. But let us listen to that voice; let us hear the voice of the apostle, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," speaking in suffering, speaking from the cross, speaking in agony, speaking in intercession, speaking from the throne,— "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth,"—Who

was that? The same Christ. It is not Moses. If they escaped not, when spoken to in sermons on Mount Sinai, on the plain with Abraham, and through Melchisedek, in the temple, in the high priest, in the new moons, on the festival occasions, — for God the Father never was seen; no man hath seen him, or can see him; — by him that appeared to Abraham, was in the burning bush, that spake by the prophets and on Mount Sinai, that is, by the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, — if they escaped not who had, it may be alleged, greater excuses for refusal, because he spoke less clearly, less intelligibly, less plainly, how much more shall not we escape, if we turn aside from him now that he speaks from heaven, speaks in our own tongue clearly, intelligibly, without parable, without figure, without type! “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,” him that speaketh from heaven; “whose voice then shook the earth,” when he spake from Mount Sinai; “but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” Blessed thought! the Son of God condescends to speak to sinners. How glorious the thought of the love and mercy embodied in that single fact that the Son of God bows the heavens to speak to us, the chiefest of sinners! Where and what are his voices? The Scriptures are their pure echoes. The texts of the Bible are not guesses, not conjectures, not hopes, not wishes — they are the voices of God, the echoes upon earth of accents uttered in heaven; the translations into human speech of the mind, the will, the mercy, the purpose, the truth, of God. What a solemn book is the Bible! It is to a Christian what the ancient oracle was to the heathen. It is to this book we are to listen, as to the word of Jesus. In it the ear of faith can hear the very beatings of the heart of infinite love, the glad chimes from the unutterable glory, the holy accents of God himself. Sometimes he speaks from Sinai.

Sometimes he speaks by the prophets. But he has spoken in these last days from Calvary. He speaks now from the throne. He speaks not in wrath, but in love; not in the crashing thunder, that they that heard entreated that the voice should not be spoken to them any more, the guilty sinner being utterly overwhelmed by the word of a sin-punishing God, but in tones rich in the sweetest music; so penetrating, so consoling, so musical, in the hearts of them that hear them, that they will still say, "Lord, evermore speak to us thus; thou hast, and thou speakest the words of everlasting life."

Christ speaks to us also from heaven. not only in texts which are the voices of great doctrines, but also in the promises. Those beautiful promises, of which divines have often made summaries, and yet summaries which never have exhausted them; those consoling promises, which Christians have felt, and yet never as they ought to have felt them; those divine lights, that glow, and burn, and sparkle, till the whole firmament is one blaze of splendor; those promises, which are the unspent voices of the Son of God, neither silenced nor distorted by their transit from an infinite height to this valley in which we are;—those promises, exceeding great and exceeding precious, are the eloquent words of that blood "that speaketh better things than that of Abel;" the words of him that speaketh, whom it is the highest treason and the greatest ruin now to refuse. His last discourse, in John 14th, 15th, and 16th, constitutes a whispering gallery of gracious promises, not like promises in some old will, or some obsolete parchment, of no application to us now. There is not a promise in the Bible that is not as fresh as if it were only uttered yesterday; there is not a hope embosomed in it that is not as applicable to me, as consolatory to you, dear reader, as if the Son of God were now to bow the heavens, and utter his voice. The Bible is not an old book of date eighteen hundred years ago, but the book of the day; the book of

these ages; the book of all ages. The rushing stream of years sweeps away the clouds that shade it; they do not in the least degree loosen its authority, darken its light, or make it less applicable than it was to Paul, to Peter, to Justin Martyr, to Augustine, or to Martin Luther, or to the last of the saints that heard the voice and rejoiced in the salvation of Jesus.

Christ speaks to us, not only in texts, or doctrines that instruct, not only in promises that cheer and comfort, but he speaks to us also in prophecies. What are these prophecies? They are the histories of the future. Such language would be absurdity if applied to the writings of man, but it is pure truth as predicated of God. Man can write the history of the past, and he does not do that always correctly; but God writes the history of the future, and writes it without a single flaw, or the possibility of a failure. Hence, these prophecies are histories of the future. They are outlines drawn by Christ, to fill up which all men of all ranks and of all degrees are consentaneously rushing. These prophecies are fragments of the coming future given to the church now, that she may have in her bosom an earnest and a foretaste of the blessedness of that day when prophecy shall fail, when tongues shall cease, and love, like a mighty ocean, shall rise and envelop all heights, and fill all depths, and Christ shall be all and in all. These prophecies, then, which are, if I may use the expression, voices of the Lord Jesus Christ, were inspired and written for our learning. Some persons say, "I will read the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, and the Gospels; but I will not read the Apocalypse." Such language is thorough Popery. Our faith is not the Gospels alone; it is the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Book of the Revelation: the complete Bible is the rule of faith to a Christian. I will hear John when he speaks to me in his Gospel, and I will hear John also when he speaks to

me in the Apocalypse, and I will hear a higher than John in both, — Christ speaking through John in both. The Gospel of John, and the Revelation written by John, are voices of the same Lord, but on different themes. They relate to different times and different subjects, but they have the same grand origin, because they have the same great speaker. If you accept Christ when he speaks in the Gospels, refuse him not when he speaks in the Apocalypse. We must not make selections of fragments of Scripture, and say, "I will study this, and will not study that." Wherever Christ speaks, there, there is a word for us. When a Jew found the word "Jehovah" on any fragment, however small, he looked upon that fragment as sacred; and, in whatever word we hear the voice of Jesus, that word we are to regard as sacred; we are to read it, mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it; we are to hear, not Peter, not Paul, not Mark, not Luke, but each as the trumpet, and the breath of Jesus as its inspiration, and the sentiment as that of him that now speaketh from heaven.

He speaks, too, not only in texts, in promises, in prophecies, but in all the events of current history. It is not true, "God spake;" it is true, "God speaks." It is not true, "God was," but "God is." His name is Jehovah, he that was, he that is, and he that is to be. God now speaks in history to the circumcised ear, just as he spoke from Sinai, or from Calvary, or from Gethsemane, or from heaven, to the listening apostles of old. History has eloquent lessons. Facts are significant, and often retrospective phenomena. Nothing occurs in God's providence that is not the echo of a text in God's word. Not an incident occurs in the history of the world which was not foreseen and prearranged long, long before. The worldly and the carnal ear hears the voice of kings, or of popes, or of councillors, or of the mob; but the ear of the Christian can hear, amid the crashes of the mob, when it rises in its fury to upset kings and trample upon

thrones, God speaking to the nations. In the voice of tyranny, when it curbs free thought, and puts down the freedom of the press, and would strangle liberty of conscience, the Christian can hear the noise of its doing its part, as a cog, or pin, or wheel, in the complicated machinery, contributing unintentionally to the same beneficent result. It is to me a most consoling thing in one sense, and to man a most humbling thing in another, to see Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, Frederick, Charles, the most illustrious of kings and conquerors, all set out to do their own will, and to fulfil their own purposes, and to achieve and gain their own laurels, but all the while mere battle-axes in the hand of God, doing God's great purposes. God had sketched the outline; they came voluntarily, but by a divine prearrangement, upon the stage, just to fill up what God had sketched out. It is not only true, "God reigned," "God reigns." The Christian stands by; and while he hears the collision and the crash of nations, the falling of kings from their thrones like stars from the firmament, and the infuriated voices of the infuriated mob, he knows and feels that it is not the sounds and harsh discords of a world deserted by its Maker, but the tuning of the instruments preparatory to the grand burst of harmony, "Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" God is now speaking, I believe solemnly, in history. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," is the sound of the day. If I may be allowed to add, the lesson of the day, the grand lesson of the day, is the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. I am one of those who believe that the seventh vial is now being poured out. The first shock of the earthquake occurred in 1848. Matters have been patched up since, merely patched up, and kept a little in abeyance. In every country on the continent of Europe all is still ferment, anxiety in the cabinets of kings, and in the congresses of republics too. Men feel at the present day, — great men who have eyes to see far, and to penetrate into the secret

workings of the social system, — that we are on the verge of gigantic occurrences; every one fears so much, because no one knows literally what a day may bring forth. Every day, every month, every year, I wait for the next shock of the earthquake. The first explosion occurred in 1848, and under it what took place? Thrones tottered, dynasties were overthrown, kings were swept from their palaces, the nations agitated and bowed as if the very breath of an offended God swept over them; and all men felt that some awful and terrible crisis had come upon the world. It was the commencement of that which is announced so plainly in the word of God: "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne," — "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," — "saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell."

I think it is now three years ago since I stated that all our established churches were going; and, surely, what has occurred since has thoroughly confirmed all. Let us look around, and see what feuds, and disputes, and treachery occur within the great ecclesiastical cities of the nations. "Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." Her judgments began by the pope as a refugee; they continue still, for that system is merely propped up, that is all — its root is gone, its vitality is spent, its existence is determined. It has, in its last spasmodic efforts, endeavored to get a footing in this land of the free, — a footing it will not long hold; for great Babylon is doomed, and strong is the Lord God that judgeth her. We have not the least fear about the issue; no doubt about the ultimate certainty of her doom, no anxiety

about the ultimate happiness of the church and people of God. One shock of the great earthquake has shaken all Europe. A little longer, and there will be other shocks still more terrific. And we shall hear His voice in the events of history, as we have heard it in the word of God. They shall hear it with composure, as it comes in the thunder, and the earthquake, and the great voices, who have heard it first as He speaks in texts, in promises, in blessings, in hopes, in joys, in the word of God.

"See," then, "that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." One might suppose—nay, one need not doubt to say, that such sentiments as these are what Christ now addresses to every one of us,—“Prepare to meet thy God,”—“Lay aside every weight, and run the race that is set before us,”—“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,”—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock,”—“Be ready, for in the hour when thou knowest not, the Son of man shall come,”—“To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts,”—“Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,”—“What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch,”—“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, when the earth and the things that are therein shall be burned up. Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” Who are they that refuse Christ speaking? They who do not listen to his word, who do not come to hear his Gospel, whose hearts are so crowded and cramped with the cares and the anxieties of this present world, that their only question is, “What shall I eat? and what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?” Those people who are so merged in things of sight and sense, that they have not one thought or anxiety, or listening moment, for that saying, “This is a faithful say-

ing, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

They, too, may be regarded as refusing Him that speaketh, who are in unbelief, the unbelief of broad, palpable scepticism; the unbelief of mere formalism; the evil heart of unbelief, as well as the evil head of unbelief, both equally departing from the living God. Do you, reader, believe this, "The wages of sin is death?" Do you believe this, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save thee? Do you believe that, except a man be born again,—not except he be baptized, but except he be born again,—he cannot see the kingdom of God? They that do not receive these truths as real, on the reception of which rests their everlasting state in the sight of God, are in unbelief, and they refuse Him that speaketh from heaven.

Those, also, who do not hear Him speaking, but hear some one else—those that hear the church, the voice of tradition, the priest, the council, or anybody else upon earth in opposition to the voice of Christ speaking in his word, refuse Him that speaketh. God's people will not hear any voice but that of Him who speaketh from heaven. There is not, therefore, the least risk that any man who is truly regenerate will ever become a papist, or a puseyite. Why? "My sheep hear my voice, and a stranger's voice they will not follow." Now, that is the evidence. Our blessed Lord himself has said so, "And a stranger's voice they will not follow." It is the mere formalists, who are dead in trespasses and in sins, that are the victims of the first delusion that comes into the world and overtakes them. The dreadful apostasy that struggles on the earth for supremacy, under the consciousness of God's judgments coming upon it, never meddles with God's people. By a secret instinct it recognizes their stability and safety. Like the vulture, or the bird of prey that follows armies to the havoc, it preys only on the dead. It does not

dare to touch the living. A living saint is proof against all such assault. He hears a voice sounding in the depths of his heart, which he knows to be the voice of the good Shepherd; and a stranger's voice, a charmer's voice, charm he never so musically, he will not hear.

They refuse Christ speaking from heaven who procrastinate. This is a very popular, but a very fatal delusion. I do not believe that there is a single person that knows the Gospel, who, at once, deliberately, and at this moment, rejects it, and proclaims it, in his inmost conscience, to be a lie, and the Bible a cunningly-devised fable. When I address those who are even theoretically acquainted with the truth, I know that I have an advocate speaking in no equivocal terms in their consciences. In their own consciences they know that what I say is true. True, all such will find excuses, apologies, pretexts. Imagination will readily invent reasons, at the suggestion of the lusts of the heart. But for all that, I know that what is faithfully said has a thorough response in every conscience. They cannot deny, in their better and solemn moments, that what is thus spoken are the words of soberness and truth. Then how do they escape? Thus. They say, "I dare not contradict you; go for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will send for you." They procrastinate; they say, "God forbid that I should reject the Bible!" I should be regarded as a libeller if I said such were not Christians; for though they have not yet concluded this hard engagement, and so become Christians, yet by and by they mean to become so truly. There is no just reason for not being now Christians. The grace of God was given to make circumstances the servants of man, not to make men the slaves of circumstances. Wherever man is, there God is able to make him a Christian; and if God's grace fails to make one a Christian where one now is, be sure of it, the chances are less and less that he will ever be a Christian

when circumstances are altered. There is not a more deceptive popular delusion than this, — I intend to be a Christian, but not yet.

We see, too, the great sin of refusing. “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.” They perished who heard him indistinctly, and refused him; much more shall they perish who hear him distinctly, and yet refuse him. It is impossible to exaggerate the sin of refusing Christ speaking to us; or, to translate it into more ordinary language, of refusing to be reconciled to God, and to be Christians. Such do not say with their lips, but they do say with their hearts, “O God, I do not believe what thou sayest when thou sayest, ‘The wages of sin is death.’ I do not believe that I am what thou describest me to be, a lost, ruined, condemned sinner. I believe that my character is good enough for heaven. I believe it, in spite of what thou sayest, and I mean to try the terrible experiment of asserting it at the judgment day.” Such not only assert that they are good enough for heaven, — that Christ’s agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion, were all acts of supererogation, — that there was no need of them, — that the world could have gone on well enough without them, — that the cross, with all its grandeur, was a mere phantasm, — that salvation with its wondrous device was an unnecessary invention, — that the New Testament, with all its records of the sufferings of the Son of God need never have been written, and that men can be saved without it, or in spite of it. Alas! such are bitterly mistaken. “He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite

unto the Spirit of grace?" God does not judge of us by what we hope, pretend, or say. He looks into the heart, and he judges what we are by what he sees and apprehends there.

How shall we escape? The apostle says, "If they escaped not who refused Him, how shall we escape?" Now, let me ask the reader, How do you expect to escape hell, and go to heaven, without a Saviour? That is the simple question. Will you answer, when you discover that my words were not mine, but His that sent me, — that you were ignorant? That you cannot say; you have read enough in this address to be answerable; there is scarcely a sermon of any denomination that does not tell you what you are, and whither you are going. None can plead ignorance, with any reason. Never were Bibles so cheap, never were books and tracts so abundant, never were opportunities of hearing the Gospel so frequent, and never, — within the Church of England or out of it, notwithstanding all the faults that are in the first, and all the divisions that are in the last, — was the Gospel more faithfully and ably preached than at the present moment. Then why are you ignorant? Will you plead great privileges? We are told what is the result of such a plea. Will you say, "Well, I was baptized." Whether sprinkled or plunged, will that be your plea? If so, you will join with very many who will urge the same defence, and will say, "Have we not eaten at thy table? have we not drunk in thy presence? and have we not done in thy name many wonderful works?" and He shall say, "Depart from me, I know you not." No such plea will stand. There is no escape, alone or in the crowd, at the judgment-day; it is not a multitude amid which we may hide ourselves and escape notice; I believe, at that day, and before that solemn tribunal, each man will be as transparent before the searching eye of the Son of God, as if that man and Jesus were the only twain in the whole universe; I believe that such will be the intense light

of that day, that one reason why the lost will call out for the hills to cover them, and the mountains to overshadow them, will be that they cannot bear the intensity of that searching and unutterable splendor : and such will be the dread silence of that moment, that each man will hear the very pulsations of his own heart, and if that heart be unregenerate, each pulse will sound a death knell to his hopes and prospects forever. There is no escape in the crowd ; there is no escape by wealth ; there is no escape by talent ; there is no escape any way : for, “ how, if we neglect so great salvation,” says the apostle, — as satisfied that there is no escape whatever, — “ shall we escape ? ”

We are told that this voice which we now hear once “ shook the earth.” Sinai shook by it, as we find in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus, and in the eighteenth Psalm. And “ once more,” he says, “ He shall shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear ; for our God is a consuming fire.” As we are told in the prophet Haggai, “ Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.” This remains yet to be fulfilled. We are told in Isaiah, the second chapter, that God will arise “ to shake terribly the earth ; ” and his people are called upon to “ cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils : for wherein is he to be accounted of ? ” We are warned in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, which I have called the lesson for the day, that “ the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken,” and there shall be great earth-

quakes. And we are told that he shall smite in pieces all the paths of the mighty, that is, the earthly structures which man is proud of. And we know that that earthquake which began in 1848, to which I have already alluded, the effects of which are still visible, will be renewed by and by, and then it will be seen how poor is all cement among nations that is not religion; how weak is all cohesion that is not of God; how truly does society become a rope of sand the instant that there is taken away vital, evangelical, pervading Christianity. These, then, are the effects of that voice that will once more, and only once more, shake alike the heavens and the earth. And at that day the whole church of Christ, I believe, will be very much asleep, as may be seen in the striking parable of The Ten Virgins: the whole of the ten slumbered and slept; five were the church of God, and five were not; but the whole slumbered and slept. And so will it be with the church of God. It will be said, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

We may expect, too, when his voice once more shakes the heavens and the earth, great persecution. In all probability, the Romish system may gain a last momentary ascendancy, an ascendancy that will be severely felt. And we are told by our blessed Lord himself, that in the last days, when the last judgments shall be poured out upon the world, there "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." It would seem, then, implied in these passages, that when this voice shakes once more the heavens and the earth, there shall be great persecution. Are we prepared for the ordeal? Are we determined to hold fast the truth at all hazards? for that persecution comes in many ways every

day. All false systems are essentially persecuting. Truth alone can afford to be generous, to be liberal, to love. But that dread apostasy, struggling for supremacy, securing it in many quarters, will, as I have said, in all probability get the ascendancy for a very little time; an ascendancy that will make its last destruction only the more sure. It will by and by be thought very unpopular to warn men's minds against the errors of that system. Nevertheless, we are not bound to say what is popular, but what is true. Our commission is to tell men truth, and to warn men against error; to lead all men to love the truth, and hold fast the Gospel that they have.

There will be, too, great formalism. Men will have a form of godliness without its power; quite satisfied that the world will last their time, and also prepared to give up the most weighty thing for the sake of peace.

Many more than this chapter will allow me to enumerate, will be the accompaniments of that voice that shakes the heavens and the earth.

But what ought we to be, or to be following? We receive "a kingdom that cannot be moved." We have "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." We are looking for "a country, a better country, that is, an heavenly one." That city begins to come down, amid the darkening clouds, from heaven. That better country already emerges from below the horizon; the foretokens of its speedy apocalypse multiply in every direction and every day; and in the fulness of time, and that time, perhaps, very near, this kingdom that cannot be moved will be our rest, and the rest of the people of God. Thus, all prospects, all prophecies, all voices, in the Bible, are meant to lead to personal Christianity.

Let us all have grace to serve God with godly fear; for, to all that have not that grace, "God is a consuming fire;"

while to all that have that grace, God is a Father and a Friend. Then, come death, come life, come the crash of nations, come the kingdom that cannot be moved, come Christ to us, or let us be taken away to Christ. Are we ready? Are we his children? Are we regenerate? Are we, our consciences bearing us witness, the people of the living God? The Lord help us to answer these questions, and bless to us these words, for Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER XII.

UNFALTERING CONFIDENCE.

“O holy trust ! O endless sense of rest,
Like the beloved John,
To lay the head upon the Saviour’s breast,
And thus to journey on.”

“For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”
— 2 TIMOTHY 1 : 12.

PAUL begins the verse I have selected by stating this fact, “Nevertheless, I am not ashamed ;” and he assigns as the ground why he gloried in the cross, to take the positive aspect of the verse, or why he was not ashamed of the Gospel, to adopt its negative, that he knew whom he had believed ; and that he was persuaded that he whom he believed was able to keep the deposit he had entrusted to his hands against that day. We find him repeating the very same expression, though assigning for it different grounds, when he says in the Epistle to the Romans, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ ;” but the ground of his not being ashamed is stated in the Epistle to the Romans to be, “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Let us mark the contrast between the two grounds of his not being ashamed. In the Epistle to the Romans, when he commenced his career as a Christian minister, he says, “I am not ashamed ; because of this grand

theological conclusion, because of this great scriptural truth, that the Gospel of Jesus is the wisdom of God, and the power of God to every one that believeth." But in this Epistle to Timothy, he says, "I am not ashamed," on what ground? "because I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The first was enunciated as a divine, this last is spoken as a Christian. The first savors of the schools of theology; the last has all the experimental evidence of the conviction of the heart. The former was uttered *ex cathedra*; the latter from the Mammertine prison. In the first, he speaks from a knowledge clear as a sunbeam; in the last, he speaks from a knowledge that not only illuminated his head with unearthly light, but had transfigured and transformed his heart by its heavenly power. In the first the great teacher, in the last the humble Christian, is apparent. In the one there is a great truth, in the other a precious and practical experience; "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day: therefore, I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

In looking at this interesting passage, we shall find, first, a creed enunciated by the apostle, short, simple, but eloquent and expressive, "I know whom I have believed." We have, secondly, a confidence embodied in the apostle's language, experimental and personal—"And am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." We have, thirdly, a great day contemplated by the apostle, so known to Timothy that it needs not to be defined; the mention of it is enough; it must often have been the topic of their converse, the prospect of their hearts, the resting-place of their hopes,—the day, the great day, of the Lord, the day of the appearing of the Son of man.

We have first of all, then, a creed expressed by the apostle,

"I know in whom I have believed." But it is more than creed, it is assurance. John writes to his converts, and says, "These things have I written unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." In other words, he says, It is possible to be a Christian, and yet not to have assurance. It is possible to be in Christ, and yet not have that unwavering, unclouded conviction that we are truly and savingly in him. A person may be in a relationship of which there is no outward symbol. Faith is union to Christ. Assurance is the sweet conviction in the inmost heart that it is so. This creed of Paul's was not simply belief; it was more, it was assurance. Faith is the root, assurance is the blossom. Christianity is the living connection with Christ which God creates; assurance is the personal inwrought persuasion of the Holy Spirit that such is alike real and indissoluble. The first is safety; the second is safety and joy. Paul says, then, "I know whom I have believed." Mark this phraseology. His faith was not the reception of a doctrine, however precious, but it was trust in a person, a living Saviour. The answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" is not, "Believe in justification by faith," precious as that doctrine is; but it is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And so the apostle here says, not, "I know these truths in which I believe, I know those great doctrines which I have taught," but he says, "I know that divine, that gracious person in whom I have believed, and of whom I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The doctrines are but the skirts of the robe; the Saviour is the divine wearer of that robe. Salvation is not a grasp of his garment, but it is union, living union, to a living person, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. Have we, my readers, any knowledge of this sort? Many may say, I know by thorough investigation how I stand in the world.

I know how all my accounts are. I know that I can meet to-morrow the demands that will be made on the rise of to-morrow's sun. Such knowledge is good. Others can say, I know the secrets of chemistry, the results of geology, the transcendent disclosures of astronomy. But can I say, I know whom I have believed? and that when the earth and all its contents shall be burned up, when sun and moon and stars shall be dispensed with, when all secular knowledge shall pass away like a vision, and leave scarce the wreck of a vision behind, — he is able to keep, amidst the collision of the elements, and the convulsion of worlds, that which I have committed to him against that day? Secular knowledge is valuable. The Gospel does not shrink from it. But Christian knowledge alone is saving. One may know all the stars in the firmament of heaven, and yet may never have seen, nor known, nor studied, the bright and the morning Star. One may know all the contents of all the encyclopedias of the world, and yet he will profit nothing at that day, unless he knows what many a child in our Sunday-schools knows right well, "This is eternal life: to know thee, and thine only Son Christ Jesus." The knowledge of earthly science may civilize; the knowledge of the Gospel alone can Christianize. The knowledge of this world improves society; but the knowledge of Christ alone saves, sanctifies, elevates society. To take the filings of iron, and to lift them from the dirty road to the beautiful and elegant parterre or garden, is unquestionably an improvement; but it is only a horizontal change, a lifting from a worse to a better position, still on earth. To lift them from the earth is the grand achievement of the Gospel, — to bring Christ, the great loadstone of the universe, near the ground, so that they not only change their position, but assume a new direction, and find above the earth their centre, and their certain and perpetual rest.

“I know,” then, and many a Christian knows it also, who cannot give very eloquent reasons for it, but who has it engraven on the tablets of the heart, “I know whom I have believed.” We plainly see, from these words, that this great conviction to which the apostle gives expression was an experimental one. The time he uttered it, as the epistle abundantly shows, was the close of his remarkable career. After sufferings undergone in every form, in perils by sea and perils by land, this conviction which dawned in light now shines with power, flourishing in the depth of his heart, and making bright the dungeon darkness about him. It is as much as if he had said, “With me Christianity is no speculation. It is no creation of an impulse. It is no interested acceptance; but a deep, inward conviction, not to be uprooted by force, nor to be wasted by years, but to outlast time, and be merged in the enjoyment of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.” So it is with many an aged Christian. He can give no *résumé* of the evidences of Christianity that goes deeper than his own heart. He never read Paley, or Chalmers, or any other great writer on the evidences, and yet he is a Christian. It is perfectly possible to be a Christian by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, without one portion of the teaching of man; and it is no less remarkable that the Christianity which stands the shock, and outlives the trial, and is more than conqueror, is not the Christianity of the schools, the conviction of the head, but the Christianity of the cottage and of the hill-side, — the living transformation of the heart, which believes because it feels, and knows because it has been taught of God, who alone teacheth savingly and to profit. When there is this deep, inward conviction, the teaching of the Holy Spirit of God, no sophism, however acutely put, can touch it; no attack, however vigorously made, can upset it; no appliance, however exquisitely conceived, can dislodge it. It is an inspiration of God. It is

strengthened by attack, it is invigorated by years, till the last moments become the brightest, and "I know in whom I have believed" is our solemn euthanasia, our deliberate testimony. A Christian is not a man made up of certain intellectual convictions, just as an astronomer is one who is acquainted with certain facts and relations connected with the stars. A Christian is one into whose heart the convictions of the Gospel have penetrated, in whose conscience the realm of right and purity and truth has been erected, who lives the life of the Son of God amidst the dying and the dead upon the earth. He is one whose inner nature has been saturated with the light, the love, and the power of the Gospel: so that to love is his instinct; to trust in God his deepest satisfaction; and to realize the presence of his Father, the most blessed experience that he can taste upon earth. The strongest evidence of real Christianity is confidence in Christ; the strongest disproof of its presence is suspicion, doubt, shrinking from Christ. I can convince the head; the Spirit of God alone can convince the heart. It is impossible that any man who is not one mass of prejudice can resist the evidence by which Christianity is demonstrated to be divine; and yet it is possible for a man to be a very Butler or a Paley in his conclusions, and to be convinced that Christianity is as true as that the world moves round the sun, and yet not be able to say, in these sublime and glorious accents, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The only Christianity that will stand in the age into which we are now rushing, — the only creed that will repel superstition, just as life repels poison, that will resist infidelity by an instinct indomitable and divine, — is that experimental acquaintance with the Gospel, less the result of demonstration, more the conclusion of prayer and thought, and wholly the creation of the Holy Ghost. The woman of

Samaria went to her own town, and she said, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did : is not this the Christ ?" There is the intellectual inference, and it was a true one. They came and saw Jesus, and listened to what he said, and the reply was, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying : for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Here was the experimental. We know the difference between belief that A is a very benevolent man, and the knowledge that A is a very beneficent man, from our own happy experience of him. It is one thing to believe that Christ is a Saviour, and many people have been happy in the knowledge of it ; it is another thing to feel that he is my Saviour by the echo of his accents in my conscience, by the repercussion of his sanctifying and converting power in the innermost recesses of my heart. It is when such living, such real Christianity has been wrought into man's heart, that the humblest peasant, with no knowledge and no learning, can say, as one said of old, "Whether Christ be true or not, whether the Bible be inspired or not, I will not discuss : this I know, that, whereas I was once blind, now I see." There is no resisting such testimony. It is an evidence to live with, an evidence to die with ; under the inspiration of which an apostle said what an apostle could not say by any other process than we have now : "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

These words constitute the dying testimony of one of the most distinguished of laborers in the vineyard of the Lord ; and it is just that experience, and exactly that testimony, which we shall need when we come to that moment which scatters all shadows, lays bare all hypocrisy, puts to the test all principles, when the earth is rushing from beneath our feet, and the great blank of eternity is opening upon our

souls. What a comfort, at such an hour, not to have a Saviour to seek, for we have found him; not to have our religion to investigate, for it is settled; to have no curse to fear, but the consciousness that Christ was made a curse for us; to have no sins to feel the burden of, but the sweet conviction that the Lamb of God has taken them away; to know that when we die it is not that we die, but death that dies, for it has lost its sting, and the grave its victory; and to feel that our separation from the company of those we leave upon the earth is only for a time, and during that short time our introduction to the happier and dearer company of those who have preceded us to glory; to be able, in short, to say, "We have fought a good fight, we have finished our course, we have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give us at that day; and not to us only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Such was the apostle's experience: no cold creed was it, but warm, transforming, living. Reader, I remind you again, this is just the difference between being a Christian and being an astronomer, or between a Christian and a chemist. It does not mean having certain convictions, being able to say amen at the close of the apostles' or the Nicene creed, approaching the Lord's table, and coming to church. All that may be done, and there may not be one atom of living Christianity in the heart. To be a Christian is not only to believe, but to feel; it is not to have the creed in the head, but the creed in the conscience; it is not only to have light in the intellect, but to have the love of God implanted in the heart.

Let us examine Paul's confidence. I have noticed his creed, let us mark his confidence. "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." It is plain here that the apostle had committed something to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is singularly inter-

esting to see how he neither mentions the Saviour, nor names the day, — “I know *whom* I have believed,” — as if Timothy and everybody that read it could make no mistake; “and am persuaded that he is able,” as if nobody could possibly misapprehend his meaning, “to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,” as if nobody could doubt what he had committed to him, — too common, too precious to all humanity, for anybody to have a query about it; and “that day,” as if nobody could be ignorant or forgetful of that day from which our eternal years and experience shall begin. Let us inquire what Paul had committed to him, that is, to Christ Jesus. What is it, reader, you feel most anxious about? About your estate? — A few years will separate you from it, or a few accidents will separate it from you. Is it about your life? — What is it? a vapor, a shadow, that continueth not, — a snow-flake in the stream, — a gleam of light in the storm. These are not worth the solemn act which is recorded here. What the apostle Paul had committed to his Lord was that which was the apostle; that which constitutes you and me, dear reader; that which thinks, recollects, judges, feels, is conscious of remorse, of hope, of joy; which death cannot destroy, which no spear-point can pierce, which no poison can rob of its inexhaustible being; which will appear before God when the body is gathered to its grave, and mingled with its kindred dust: it was his soul. And, need I tell you, reader, that the only thing that you have by nature of unspeakable importance is this one thing, the immortal soul? “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” A pin-point may destroy life, but it does not touch the soul. It smiles at death, secure in its sanctuary within. The instant that dissolution occurs, and all seems still in that dead body to the spectator, that instant the soul realizes only a truer and a more real life. The truth is, there is no such thing as

death. Dying is merely the soul laying aside the worn-out garment of clay, in which it has travailed upon earth, and ascending in its awful nakedness into the presence of God, there to wait, if a ransomed soul, for the redemption of the body, the manifestation of the sons of God. That, therefore, which should be our most anxious care, is that which is ourselves, the soul of man. All creation was made for it. All the splendor ever shining on that grand dome that is over us, all the beauty spread out on earth's floor, all sublime, all beautiful things in nature, exist for the soul of man. This body, so beautifully made, must be designed for a grand inhabitant. This casket, so exquisitely carved, must be intended for a precious jewel. This tent of ours, so wisely constructed, is for no mean dweller. Thus, all nature was made to be a ministry to the soul; and all nature, in its heights and in its depths, in its streams and in its winds, in its flowers and in its fruits, in the virgin beauty of the morning and in the quiet grandeur of the eve, preaches to man. They exist as a ministry for us, that we may feel the importance of that which Paul committed to his Lord, and be able to say, as he said on his death-bed, "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." All providence exists for that soul. The world's ebbs and flows, sun-rising and sun-setting, days, months, years, are but the handmaids that minister to that soul, to convince man what a solemn trust he has, what an infinite importance is attached to him. But what it teaches above all is redemption. Tell me, sun, moon and stars, and all nature, the greatness of that soul to whom you minister. Tell me, all events in providence. But tell me above all, O Lamb of God, who didst shed thy blood to redeem it, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Angels serve it; devils quarrel about it. Life is its seed-time; eternity its harvest. Calvary, Golgotha, Pen-

tecost, all took place, because God so loved the soul that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life.

“ Knowest thou the importance of the soul immortal ?
Behold the sky’s midnight glory — worlds on worlds !
One thousand add, and twice ten thousand more ;
Then weigh the whole — one soul outweighs them all.”

May we not, then, ask, If this soul be so important, to whom should we commit it ? To whom did the apostle Paul commit it ? Unquestionably unto Him in whom alone he glories : of whom he says he was not ashamed. “ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Not to the church did the apostle Paul commit his soul. Is it not wonderful how little the New Testament speaks about the church, — how much it speaks about the church’s Lord ? What a contrast between the language of the New Testament and that of Dr. Delahogue, the celebrated Roman Catholic divine :

“ A Catholic may say at that day,” speaking of the judgment-day, “ If we have followed error, thou, God, hast deceived us by thy so clear and reiterated precept of hearing the church as thee thyself ; and if we have followed error, thou thyself hast deceived us, and we are excused.”

What an awful sentiment is here ! what a difference between it and that of Paul ! — “ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Nor did the apostle Paul commit it to angels. They need to be taken care of. They can take care only of those intrusted to them. They are ministering servants to them that are the heirs of salvation. To whom did Paul commit it ? To that glorious personage whom Stephen saw in the agonies of martyrdom, and

to whom he addressed his last words, — frightful idolatry, if Christ were only man; true and just worship, if Christ be God, — “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” He committed his soul unto that same Saviour to whom David in earlier days committed his, when he said, “Into thine hands, O Lord, I commend my soul.” None else is able to take care of it. None else shall be intrusted with its charge. My soul is as great as an angel in its inherent grandeur; it is more precious to me than an angel’s life; I will not trust it to any creature upon earth. I cannot trust it to the highest hierarchy that wings his flight before God’s throne. I can commit it to my God alone. With him is omnipotence as his ability, and omnipresence as his sphere; so, I will not commit it to any one beside.

But, you ask, how did the apostle commit it to Christ? It was, of course, an act of thought and feeling, — the same way in which we can now commit that soul. If any one can this day bow the knee at the Saviour’s footstool, and from the depth of the heart can now say, O blessed Jesus, I have ruined this soul! It is fallen; it is guilty; it is perishing; it is dying! Blessed Lord, I cannot commit it to any creature under heaven, but unto thee! But I do commit it unto thee, my Lord! Thou Lamb of God, wash it in thy blood; clothe it in thy righteousness; sanctify it by the Holy Spirit; inlay it with thy beauty; inspire it with thy love; unite it to thyself! Make it thine, blessed Lord! Take not thy Holy Spirit away from it! Let it be a trophy of thine agony; let it be the fruit of thy travail! Present it to thy Father without spot or blemish, a glorious thing, — mine the blessing, thine the glory, O Lord, my Saviour! Reader, can you say so? Let every one who reads this work ask himself, ere the night come, Can I really from my inmost heart say this? Let us not disguise the matter. There is no Christianity unless we can say so. There is no Christianity within us, I repeat it,

unless we can say so. If you can thus solemnly and personally, to use the language of the old divines, "covenant with Christ," commit to his hands, and care, and keeping, your precious souls, he will take them. As sure as we commit the soul to him, he will accept it. He knocks for admission; he waits for it; he prays of us to commit it to his keeping; and he will preserve it safe as Omnipotence can keep that which is committed to his care.

But what, we may ask in the next place, was the ground of the apostle's persuasion, "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"? First, Christ undertook to keep it. He says, in that beautiful chapter of St. John, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." He says, in another place, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and none of them is lost." And in another place, "I give unto them eternal life, and none shall be able to pluck them out of my hands." Now, whatever Christ undertook, we know he accomplished. He undertook to magnify the law: he did it. He undertook to vanquish death: he did it. He undertook to open the grave: he did it. He undertook to plead at the Father's right hand: he does it. He has undertaken to save us: and just as surely he will do so. Those who are given to him by the Father, committed to him by themselves, he will present faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

But he is able also, as our mediator, at our Father's right hand. Do we think justly of this? It is as necessary that Christ should keep us by his intercession, as that he should redeem us by his blood. Even if redeemed by his precious blood, if he were to let us go for one moment, we should be lost forever. Those he purchased by his blood he now keeps by his life. Those he redeemed upon the cross he now pre-

serves upon the throne. Them that he made his by bearing their sins he now keeps his by praying that their faith fail not. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat," — there is your peril; — "but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," — there is your safety.

Such, then, is Paul's committing of his soul to Christ; such the strong persuasion that he is able to keep what he has committed to him against that day. This language of the apostle's, as I have already stated, was used in the near prospect of martyrdom. Now, nothing makes us doubt religion more, when it is a form and not in the heart, than trials and sufferings. When David saw the wicked prosper, and felt himself fail, he was tempted to doubt the existence of God altogether; and many a Christian, when all God's billows have rolled over him, is provoked to say, God hath forsaken me. But the apostle Paul was in perils by sea, in perils by land, in perils among false brethren, reproached, maltreated, driven from his native land, — a refugee expecting martyrdom at Rome, — and yet he never once doubted that all this was working for his good, and he never once flinched from the magnificent persuasion, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." And this language of Paul, in such a prospect, and under such circumstances, is truly heroic. Not a few think, in the present day, that if a Christian avow his creed, he is dogmatic, or he is bigoted. They assert that one ought to say, It is my humble opinion that Christ is God. It is my humble belief that Popery is a lie. It is my judgment, on the whole, that Christianity is true. Away with such contemptible, such unchristian phraseology! The apostle Paul knew nothing of it, in his creed or convictions. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed

to him against that day." Our faith is no fantasy, our hope is no equivocation, our expectations are no dream, our convictions shall not waver with the beating of the pulse, our Christianity shall not die when the outward man fails; on the contrary, while the natural life wastes and wanes, this living and glorious conviction shall only strike its roots the deeper, and lift its branches the higher, and teach us not to say, but to sing, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Thy word, O God, is truth; and we know it.

Finally, what "day" is this? The day that settles all disputes, that closes all conflict; when all tares shall be uprooted, and the righteous shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. That day it is on which the saints of God, when the last fire shall consume the round globe, and the world and the things that are therein shall all be burned up, — amidst that dread convulsion, and in the upward curling of that universal flame, — shall be safe, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. The fire has no commission to singe one hair of the head of a single believer who has committed his soul to the keeping of Christ Jesus. It will be that day when we that are alive shall not prevent them that are asleep; when the Lord shall descend, and the trumpet shall sound; when the dead in Christ shall rise first; when "we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

At that day this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible shall put on incorruptibility; those faces we now look upon at our firesides shall glow in the splendors of immortality; and you, reader, if I address one to whom I am personally known, shall recognize me, and I shall recognize you,—

each in the same essential, identical body — only transfigured, transformed, reconstructed and beautiful, without spot, or wrinkle, or sign of age, or foretold of decay ; — for this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruptibility. Then shall be the open manifestation of the sons of God, when Paul, and all before Paul, and all since Paul, shall be gathered round the throne of God and the Lamb. And, methinks, at that day, Jesus, who sits upon the throne, to whom each saint committed his soul to be saved, will say, “ Abel, do you regret your martyrdom? Enoch, do you repent of your walk with me? Abraham, are you sorry that you left Mesopotamia and Ur of the Chaldees, and went to a country you knew not whither? Matthew, are you sorry that you left your profits at the receipt of custom, and followed me? Peter, do you grieve you left your nets to bleach upon the shores of Galilee, and became a fisherman of men? Stephen, do you lament your martyrdom? Luther, do you grieve now that you were so faithful? Calvin, do you repent of your having written your noble Institutes? Do you not all feel — is it not your experience, that all things worked together for good to you, and that the things that severed man from man only knit you closer to me, and made you count all but loss for the excellency of him who hath washed you in his own blood, and made you kings and priests unto God and your Father forever?” This is the day when Christ shall give up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all and in all; when he shall say, “ Here am I, and the sheep thou hast given me. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and I have lost none of them. Father, I will that these that thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

In conclusion, let us notice, in the whole of this avowal, the

entire absence of anything like self-righteousness in the apostle Paul. "I know," — not that I have suffered with all the faithfulness of a martyr; not that I have lived with all the purity of a saint; not that I have preached the Gospel with a faithfulness that never faltered in the worst nor ever wearied in the best of times; not I know that I have been in perils on the sea, in perils on land, in perils among false brethren, for Christ's sake; — but, as if all these his sufferings were not worthy to be compared with the magnificence of the glory that Christ bestows, he thinks of none — he knows nothing but Christ: this I know, — I have forgotten all besides, — "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep," not that which has glorified him, but "that which I have committed unto him," to be justified by him "against that day."

Reader of this work, you and I, if we are believers, shall die in the same manner. The best deeds, and the worst deeds, we shall bring to the foot of the cross, to be equally forgiven by him that hung upon it. Nothing we have said, done or suffered, will be worthy to be remembered. Our language, if our hearts be right in that day, shall be the words of the dying martyr of old, "None but Christ, none but Christ." Many a one, in the work of self-examination, is forced to say, "I know little of the history or of the evidences of Christianity. If I were to meet a sceptic, I could not solve his objections," — though, it must never be forgotten, it is one thing for an objection to be insoluble, and it is another thing for you or me not to be able to solve it. I might meet a Romanist, and not be able to contend successfully with him for the faith. But this I can say, — "I know whom I have believed." My faith often falters; my love is often cold; my heart often hesitates; my experience is that of great depression; my trials are very many; business is very perplex-

ing—it takes too much of my time, my thought, and my heart. But, in spite of all, and in the midst of all, a Divine Power has enabled me to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Amen.

CHAPTER XII.

EUTHANASIA.

- “ Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.
‘ Dust thou art, to dust returnest,’
Was not spoken of the soul.
- “ Art is long, and time is fleeting ;
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.
- “ In the world’s broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle, —
Be a Christian in the strife.
- ‘ Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time
- “ Footprints that perhaps another,
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again.”

“ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” — 2 TIMOTHY 4: 6—8.

How noble was the spectacle presented in the Mammer-tine prison, at Rome! An apostle, weary and worn out with

toils in his Master's cause, expecting to be led forth to be torn in pieces by the lions, or to be cast into the flames, takes a collected retrospect of all his past career, and expresses no regrets, and enters calmly and joyously on the prospect of his coming doom, and neither flinches nor fears it. Beautiful and quiet, and full of strength, is the closing scene presented here. It is a contrast strong and sharp as contrast can be to scenes, death-bed scenes, presented by those who either knew not the Lord of Paul, or had rejected the Gospel of Christ. One distinguished for his taste in literature and acquaintance with the world thus closed his sparkling career, in language which sufficiently contrasts with the words of Paul. Lord Chesterfield said, "I have recently read Solomon with a kind of sympathetic feeling. I have been as wicked and as vain, though not as wise, as he; but now I am old enough to feel the truth of his reflection, — 'All in the world is vanity and vexation of spirit.' " Goëthe, the distinguished German philosopher and poet, declared, at the age of eighty-four, as the lights of time went out, and the great load-stars of eternity were beginning to open out on his vision, that he had scarcely tasted twenty-four hours' solid happiness in the whole course of that protracted career. Lord Byron, the great poet, gifted beyond measure in genius, destitute more than many of grace, wrote his experience in his own beautiful but unhappy strains, when he said, upon the very verge of the tomb :

"Though gay companions o'er the bowl
 Dispel a while the sense of ill,
 Though pleasure fill the maddening soul,
 The heart — the heart is lonely still.

"Ay, but to die, and go, alas !
 Where all have gone, and all must go;
 To be the nothing that I was
 Ere born to life and living woe.

“Count o’er the joys thine hours have seen,
Count o’er thy days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou hast been,
’T is something better not to be.

“Nay, for myself, so dark my fate
Through every turn of life hath been,
Man and the world so much I hate,
I care not when I quit the scene.”

The bitter sarcasm of the poet contrasts indeed with the glorious pæan of the apostle, “I have fought a good fight, I am ready to be offered up. There is reserved for me a crown of righteousness.” Voltaire, the French atheist, pronounced the world to be full of wretches, and himself the most wretched of them all. Mirabeau, one of the same school, died calling in his last moments for opium to deaden the terrible forebodings of coming woe. Paine died intoxicated and blaspheming. Hobbes, prepared to take a leap in the dark; and Hume died joking and jesting about the boat of Charon, very much, I suspect, in the same way in which school-boys whistle when they walk through a dark and lonely place, just to keep their spirits up and their terrors down; but Paul, of far different character, breaks forth, as he departs, in the euthanasia indicated in the text, “I have fought a good fight.”

Why should there be this contrast? Was Paul a fanatic? He was the soberest of men. Was he a mere mystic dreamer? He was the most logical of reasoners. Was he a novice? He had been in perils by land, in perils by sea, in perils amongst false brethren, arrested, tried, beaten, scourged, imprisoned; and yet, at the close of all, conscious that he had a rock beneath him, and a bright light above him, and a glorious home before him, he breaks forth in these thrilling, almost inspiring, certainly inspiring accents, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my

course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." I do indeed believe that a sober and extensive comparison of the death-beds of those who have repudiated the Gospel with the dying moments of those who have accepted and rejoiced in it would alone convince mankind that Christianity is true, — that infidelity, practical or theoretical, is a deception, a delusion mischievous in life, and miserable at death.

In looking at the words which I have read, and selected as the subject of thought, let me notice, first, Paul's present position : " I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand ; " next, the retrospect that he takes : " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; " and, lastly, the hope that he cherishes : " Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

I wish our translation in this passage were only equal to the beautiful original. The words he uses on looking at his present position, and translated " I am ready to be offered up," may be strictly and literally rendered, " I am poured out," — *σπένδομαι*, — " I am being poured out." Some critics suppose that he alludes to the fact that when victims were slain oil was poured upon them by the priest as part of the sacrificial offering. But I do not think that it is necessary to recur to such an illustration as this, because in other portions of Scripture we have the same expression appropriated by others, and in one instance applied to our Lord himself. David says, for instance, speaking of himself on the brink of death, and at the close of suffering, " I am poured out like water." And the rapt prophet, describing the sufferings of Jesus, says, " He poured out his soul unto death." It may, therefore, be perfectly proper that Paul

should express his dying moments by language which does not imply anything like sacrifice, and is not, therefore, open to the misconstructions that have been, or might be, built upon it. He practically says, in these closing words, "I am now upon the confines of eternity. I hear at the same moment the voices of the world that retires and of the world that rushes in. The noises of time are dying away; the notes and voices of eternity are bursting on my ear, like the chimes of the waves of a distant ocean. I am between the two twilights, — the twilight of time that ends in night, the twilight of eternity that ends in ever-brightening day. I am in the valley where the waters of time meet and are absorbed, and from which the broad river of eternity starts upon its majestic course. I am on that solemn point, where I can review the past, and feel and see what it really is, and perceive and anticipate the future, and rejoice in the splendid vision that now bursts from it upon my waiting and entranced soul." This moment is not peculiar to Paul. It must overtake us all, and will be felt by us to be the intensest and the most solemn moment in all the experience and biography of man. A moment will come to the youngest and the oldest, when he will look back upon the world, and see that its clouds have lost the fringe, the roseate fringe of light, that did not belong to them; and that its possessions were but toys, that, once very beautiful, have now lost their gilding; and that its substance, or what he thought to be so, was but a shadow; and that its mightiest interests, those that stirred nations to their depths, were but the wants and wishes and playthings of babes, compared with those grand and lasting realities whose weight we shall know is in the world to come. How terrible to hear the last sounds of the waters of life dying upon the ear, and, while looking before us into the opening eternity, to see nothing but a deep, unsounded, fathomless abyss, — no covenant rainbow over it, no voice of a

Saviour saying, "Come up hither!" It is in such a case that there is a "fearful looking for of fiery indignation ready to destroy the adversary." The last sand will one day be in the glass; the last moment must come. One may try to get rid of the thought of it by taking a deeper plunge into the pseudo joys and follies of the world; but come it will. God has fixed it as sure as the setting and rising of the sun; and it is profitable to ponder now how we shall reflect on the world then, and what will be the price that we shall put upon its best and now most beloved possessions. Paul said it had no charm in his eyes, no attraction to his heart; his death-bed was the brightest spot on the wide world's stream. It was his Pisgah, from which he saw from afar the promised land; his dying moment was his dearest moment, for it was the vestibule of his Father's house, the portal of the grand temple of eternity; while death was but the passage from the one to the happiness and glory of the other. "I am ready to be poured out, and," he adds, as if to express his meaning more fully, "the time of my departure is at hand."

The word "departure" embosoms a beautiful thought; it is the Christian epithet for death. It is that subdued and mitigated expression of death which Christianity alone can give us. "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." But the word that is here translated "departure," *ἀναλύσις*, means, first, a breaking up; and, if this be the strict interpretation of it, it is as if the apostle had said, "The earthly tabernacle is now to be shivered; the casket that keeps the precious and the indestructible gem is about to be broken up; the tent in which I have been a sojourner is ready to be struck." "I" is not the eye that sees, the ear that hears, the mouth that tastes, the hand that handles; but the being within that makes use of all these as the instruments of its action, the exponents of its will. "I" is the immortal soul; the body is but the machinery that the soul

works during its school-days, to let the world know what its hopes, its joys, its designs, are. It is not "you" that I look upon; it is only the outward tabernacle in which "you" sojourn; and when that outward tabernacle of yours, like Paul's, shall be broken, or shall decay, and waste and wear down to the grave, "you" will not even have the suspension of your consciousness. In dying there is not even a suspension of the continuity of life for a single second. On the contrary, I believe that while the body becomes gradually insensible, and falls to pieces, the more clear becomes the sight as the films drop off; the keener the hearing, as other noises subside and obstructions are removed; and the more concentrated and intense the sensibilities of the inhabitant within. But the expression *ἀναλύσεις*, while thus applied to a tent to be struck, to a casket to be broken, is also applied in Scripture to a ship casting off her moorings; and, should this be the apostle's idea, then it conveys to us these words: "I have been long, as it were, at anchor; the anchorage-ground has been a stormy, a tempestuous, and an unpleasant one; but now there is a fair wind, a swelling tide; a voice from beyond the ocean speaks to me. I will now spread every stitch of canvas, and before the glorious gale steer my onward and rejoicing course, till I reach the shores of that great white sea, where there is no more sorrow, nor crying, nor death,—where all former things are passed away, the bright mirror of which reflects the everlasting sunshine." Thus the apostle, thus a Christian, speaks of his dying moments. He contemplates that moment with the most perfect self-possession. None but a child of God can speak with such command of feeling, such self-possession,—not of another's dying, but of his own. It is very easy to preach how one should die; shall I say it is very different to die as a Christian should die? Yet it is not so. But the apostle Paul here speaks in the immediate prospect of his own death,

with that command, that quiet, which always indicates strength. Stormy things are generally weak ; quiet things are generally strong. Rich in the confidence of the Gospel, resting on a rock from which martyrdom could not move him, and which no assault could shake, he calmly looks to the great white throne, the everlasting rest, the presence of his God, the crown of glory, in language that indicated deep, still, enthusiastic joy, checkered by not one emotion of fear, regret, alarm, or longing to evade it. So much, then, for Paul's present position, "I am ready to be poured out."

Let us now look at his retrospect. When man comes to die, by an instinct that he never can resist he looks backward as well as forward ; he cannot help it. Past things become always clearest just as we are leaving them ; and future things will appear brightest the nearer we approach them. At that moment, that solemn hour, when the departing twilight of time mingles with the dawning twilight of eternity, man looks back on the day that he has spent, and memory becomes illuminated with unearthly light, and all its secret and long-hidden letters are revealed, and he reads its records. Paul, looking back, gave this testimony of himself, not in self-righteousness, — for he adds elsewhere, "not I, but the grace of God ;" "I live, yet not I ;" — but, to give glory to God, and encouragement to us, he thus records an historical and biographical fact, — "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." The word translated "fight" is the word *ἀγώνα*, which means literally "an agony." It is connected with *ἀγωνία*, the word used to express the sufferings of our Lord "in an agony" (Luke 22 : 44). It is also related to the verb rendered "strive." "Strive (agonize) to enter in at the strait gate." It is the very same word which the apostle uses when he says, "Every man that striveth for the mastery" (literally, "that agonizes for the mastery." — *πᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος*) "is temperate in

all things :” teaching us that men are not wafted to heaven without their knowing it ; they must pursue a defined career, in order to reach heaven, — a course adopted purposely, deliberately, consciously. If we allow ourselves to drift, we shall be driven upon shoals and rocks ; but if we take the chart and the compass God has given us, and steer by the lights of truth, we shall reach the haven of happiness and rest. All the language of the Bible indicates that, if there be a struggle in order to get to ruin, it is not without a struggle, it is not upon a soft lawn, but upon a battle-field, that we reach the laurel, attain the crown, and are received as conquerors by him that loved us.

And who that is a Christian knows not that there is much in Christian experience which is but faintly expressed by the word “ agony ” ? What fears to grapple with ! what prejudices to overcome ! what passions to subdue ! what temptations to resist ! how difficult to get over the fear of man ! and no less difficult the favor of man ! These, and innumerable others, crowd upon us like fierce foes, and try to intercept or divert our upward and onward career to glory. He that knows most of his own heart, and its agony in keeping itself right, will always be the most forbearing, charitable, and forgiving witness to the sins, the follies, the defects, the shortcomings, of others. “ I have fought,” says Paul, “ a good agony, a good fight.”

But the language is not only “ a fight,” but “ a good fight ; ” — “ I have fought a good fight.” Our translation does not fully express it. I do not wish to seem to find fault with our translation, as if unfit to unfold the mind of God ; and, therefore, when I notice an opening for an emendation in its rendering, I always wish to add that, if everything in this translation were corrected, it would only tell, not more truly, but more obviously, for the truths of evangelical religion. Were all the defective translations of the authorized version

of the New Testament corrected, it would only be more visibly in favor of Protestant Christianity. Our translators were so jealous lest they should be suspected of straining a word to make it speak Protestantism, that they have often come short of the full meaning; they have never exceeded it, in any one instance, that I am aware of. The apostle's expression means, not only "I have fought a good fight," but — τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλὸν ἠνώνισμαι — "I have fought that agony, that glorious one,"—"I have fought that fight, that conflict, that glorious one." In other words, he declares that fight which a Christian has to wage with foes within and foes without, fears in his heart and fightings in the world, is, with all its pangs, — and he had felt most of them, — with all its difficulties, — and he had encountered not a few, — reviewing it at that impartial moment when things are seen impartially and solemnly, to be a glorious fight; glorified by the footprints of Jesus. It is in many respects a glorious fight; for we have a glorious presence, glorious promises, glorious strength; it is fought with glorious weapons, by heroes who are candidates for a glorious crown; it is for no perishing reward, it is for no earthly crown, it is for no party ascendancy. Angels from their starry thrones, saints from the battlements of the sky on which they have been crowned victors, Jesus the captain of the faith, are witnesses of the conflict; and, seeing that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us fight that glorious fight, and "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking" (not to the witnesses, but) "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

The apostle adds, Not only have I fought a good fight, but, "I have finished my course." The Christian life is likened to a course, also; it is not only a conflict, but a race. And this language is sustained by the passage I have just quoted: "Let us run the race set before us." Sometimes we "run," sometimes "fight," sometimes "stand still." We

have not to make our Christian race; nor have we the selection of the ground on which we are to run; nor are we responsible for the smoothness, or the ruggedness, or the circuitousness, if I may use the word, of that race: we are responsible only for looking to Jesus, and running with unsubdued purpose the race set before us, not by us, but "by Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith." If we look to him, we shall run safely. If we look to opponents on the right and on the left, to the shouts meant to cheer us, or the hisses meant to overwhelm us, we shall stumble and fall by the way. If we look right before to Christ, the beginner and finisher, the Alpha and Omega, the author and the end of it, we shall run not only safely, but rapidly and joyfully. All human lights are like lamps at the top-mast of a vessel, that swing with the ship, and cast down only a few scattered rays upon the shrouds, or on the decks, or on the vessel's wake; but Jesus is like the pole-star;—let us keep him in the eye, his light in the heart. If we pursue our course looking unto him, it will be a safe, successful, and eminently prosperous one.

Thus St. Paul takes the retrospect of the past, saying, "I have fought a glorious fight, I have finished my course;" he adds one expression more, "I have kept the faith." Not, I have invented it, for that he did not do; but, "I have kept the faith" that was committed unto me. There is difficulty in keeping the faith. "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." There is the sceptic that would snatch it from us; there is the Romanist that would corrupt it, by adding to it, and incorporating with it the traditions of men; there is temptation in the pulpit, while unfolding one aspect of the truth, to merge and weigh down the obverse, in itself equally precious; there is temptation, in trying to convince a man of one great truth, to concede so much, in doing so, that we shall compromise another no less precious truth, that we ought not to let go; there is the world's tendency

to laugh down the faith ; there is Satan's ever active effort to debase the faith ; and there is the corruption of our own hearts, too much allied to both. Paul, however, kept that faith as a precious jewel, because possessed of unspeakable excellency, and sure to have glorious results ; he kept it in his understanding, clear, comprehended, defined ; in his heart, loved and cherished as the most precious treasure ; unfolded it in his sermons, illustrated it in his life ; and could say at its close, what grace can enable others to say, that though he had been tossed on floods of afflictions, though he had been urged or tempted to curse God and die, and, in prosperity, in those moments when the sun shone brightest, the temptation to forget God had not been an entire stranger to his bosom, yet he had not let go that precious faith. He kept it, not for himself only, but for us. In one sense, the followers of Christ thus partake of the character of their Lord. Ours becomes, in its degree, a vicarious life. The father labors that his children may possess. The one generation suffers that the next generation may enjoy. The race-course, if I may recur to the figure used by the apostolic runner, is beaten smooth by the feet of previous generations. that succeeding generations may run with the greater speed, and reach the goal with greater ease. "I have kept the faith." Can we, in our retrospect of the past, in any sense use the language of Paul ? If we have not finished our course, are we running it ? If we have not yet gained the victory, are we fighting ? If we have not yet sealed the faith by blood or death, can we say we have still kept it ? It is the great law of God, that through fighting, running, warring, struggling, — much tribulation in some shape, — we are to get to heaven ; and the man that has not this God-mark, this seal of God's children, in the shape of personal sickness, will have it in domestic trouble, or in public scorn, or in inner, personal, experimental bitterness. In some

shape or other we must strive, fight, run, struggle, before we reach the kingdom of heaven. We are pardoned, not that we may be indolent, but that we may stand up and fight manfully for the truth, and run the race, and keep the faith, and glorify him who hath called us from darkness into his marvellous light. It is out of the prickliest stem that the loveliest flower blossoms ; it is out of the greatest tribulation there emerges, not by merit, but by grace, the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give us at that day.

Such is Paul's retrospect : " I have finished my course, I have fought that glorious fight, in which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob took a part. I have kept that faith which was committed to me, unsoiled, uncontaminated, pure as God gave it."

Let us now hear what was his prospect : " Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." The word " henceforth " is the rendering of *λοιπὸν*. It is as if he said, " As for that which remains now, I feel that I have kept the faith, that I have run the race, that in my measure and by grace I have served my God ; as to the rest, that costs me no trouble. Earth presents no more attraction, and the future no more trials. I have only to look at that which awaits me." And what is that ? First, it is " a crown of righteousness." Not a garland, like that which was given in the Olympic games to the successful wrestler or runner, made up of parsley, or other green and perishable leaves ; not a crown secured by treason, or seized by stratagem, or achieved by the sword, the result of bloodshed or of battle ; but a crown of incomparable splendor, purchased by the righteousness and prepared by the hand of Jesus Christ, the righteous judge. Every gem in it will reflect his image ; every wearer of it will be arrayed in his robes ; and the whole

company of them who have crowns upon their heads, and palms in their hands, the tokens of their royalty and victory, shall give the undivided glory, and the honor, and the thanksgiving, to him who wore a crown of thorns about his bleeding temple, that we might wear crowns of righteousness on our redeemed heads for ever and ever. "A crown of righteousness," he says, is "laid up." — "Henceforth there is laid up for me." It is not a peradventure, but a certainty. It is not what may be the subject of successful aggression, or possible decay; it is beyond the grasp of ambition, far above the tide-mark of the ebbing and flowing waves of time; it is a fixture beyond the envy, or the aspiration, or the power of Satan, "laid up" in the purposes, pledged in the promises, superintended by the omniscience, and guarded by the omnipotence, of God my Saviour.

And that "crown of righteousness" shall be given. "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me." This hope is presented as realized by the Lord, the righteous judge himself, in those remarkable words, in which he says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom,"—here is the very figure,—receive the crown of righteousness from me, the righteous judge, in that day. It is "given" by Christ, not earned by us. The very sound of grace rings in the realms of glory. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "He giveth grace and glory." "Then shall he say, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Paul does not say, A crown of righteousness, which I have purchased, or which I have deserved, or which I have gained: but it is a crown, by grace, given at that day; just as the

grace which enabled me to fight the good fight, and finish my course, was given me at this day.

And it shall be given by "the righteous judge;" that is, it shall be given righteously. We rarely think of this fact, that when God in Christ forgives a sinner, he does it, not simply as an exercise of mercy, but of justice and of righteousness. For, what does the apostle say? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just," that is, righteous, "to forgive us our sins." When Christ, therefore, shall acquit his own, and admit them to everlasting glory, not one voice in the universe will say that any have got to heaven that ought not to have been admitted there; and when Jesus, the righteous judge, shall say to the self-ruined, "Depart from me," not one voice in the universe will say that there is one in the realms of the lost that did not deserve to be there, and that ought not to be there. Christ shall be seen in the awards of the blessed, and in the judgments of the lost; not in the one as only merciful, nor in the other as only wrathful, but in both "the righteous judge."

The apostle indicates how complete was his personal assurance, when he says, "the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me." This is full assurance of faith; "he shall give it me." Some ask the question, "I wish to be saved, but did Christ die for me?" Such a question is an improper one. The right question one should ask is, "Why not for me?—why not for me?" Is there any brand on any one brow, legible to heaven or earth, revealing these words, "For this man Christ did not die"? Is there any speciality in your guilt that sinks you below the depth of the very chiefest of sinners? Is there anything in your sins so hateful, so deep, that the blood that forgave Paul the persecutor, the thief upon the cross, Mary Magdalene, the worst and chiefest of sinners, cannot forgive you? Why not for you? My dear brother, you will honor Jesus more by approaching him in

confidence, and believing that he died for you, than by standing afar off, questioning his love, limiting the illimitable, and trying to explain away the precious efficacy of that most precious blood, which cleanses from the least sin, which cannot be forgiven without it, and from the greatest sin, which it is adequate to wash away, so as to make the repentant criminal himself white as the snow; "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Such was the language of Paul; such was his vesper hymn, his even-song, his euthanasia; the last accents, not merely of a dying apostle, but of a dying Christian. The same grace that enabled Paul thus to live, and thus to die, is offered to us; and we are responsible to God for not having it.

But the apostle adds another expression, lest it should seem, because he was an apostle, that he had a special monopoly of his "crown of righteousness." He adds, in the exercise of that true catholicity which wished the Gospel to be limited by nothing but the circumference of the globe, "And not to me only. Do not suppose that I have a special claim, because I have undergone special sufferings. Do not think that I am entitled to a crown, because I am an apostle. For, while I preach as an apostle, I live as a Christian, and I die as a Christian; and in this sense, and in this light, and in this relationship, I pronounce these solemn words: 'Not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.'" Our race is not Paul against Peter, and Paul and Peter against us, so that only one shall be crowned; but it is all of us together against the world, so that all that will may by grace receive the crown of righteousness. Paul claims nothing for himself, to the exclusion of us. No privilege is here for the first, to the exclusion of the last. "The same crown of righteousness is for all that love the appearing of Christ Jesus."

I am sure every reader of the Bible must be struck with

the frequency of the hope of Christ's appearing, in the New Testament Scriptures. I think it is impossible to conceal or to get over the fact, that the great hope, the glorious hope, of believers in the New Testament, is the personal appearing of the Son of God. I might count a hundred texts — I am sure I do not exaggerate the number — in which allusion is made to this. "Looking for that blessed hope, the glorious epiphany or manifestation of the sons of God." "Whom the Lord will consume by the spirit of his mouth," and destroy by the "brightness of his coming." So Peter, when he speaks of trials, says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." And so he says again, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the ἀποκάλυψιν, revelation," or manifestation, "of Jesus Christ." And what does Paul himself say? "He will come the second time without sin unto salvation to them that look for him."

Let us take care lest, by so thinking of the cross as not to think at all of the crown, we lose, not indeed the safety, but the full privilege, the happiness, the joy, of Christians. I venture to assert that, in the New Testament Scriptures, we are as often told to look for Christ that is to come as we are told to look at Christ that has come. We are almost as often exhorted in the New Testament to look for his second coming, as we are to look back in faith at his first coming. But why should I separate them? I cannot have a Saviour crucified alone; I must also hope for a Saviour crowned. I will look back at him bearing my sins upon the accursed tree, that my footing may be firm on the Rock of Ages. I will look forward to him coming the second time without sin unto salvation, that my hope may be raised to its true pitch, and that I may participate in the joy of them that love his appearing. Hence

the apostle comprehends all Christianity in this, that, if we love Christ's appearing, his *ἐπιφάνειαν*, or personal manifestation, we are among those who shall receive a crown of righteousness. How beautifully does the sacrament of the Lord's Supper tell us this! "Do this in remembrance that Christ has come, and until he come again." A communion table presents his cross and his crown, and spans the gulf between. It helps us to rest upon the one, and to anticipate with joy the other. Do we think of Christ crowned, as well as of Christ crucified? Is our future filled with Christ, just as our past is? Is he to us not only the Alpha of the past, but the Omega of the future? Are we not only thankful that he has come to suffer, but hopeful that he will soon come to receive us to himself, that, where he is, there we may be also?

"Them that love his appearing," he adds, "at that day." How often have we noticed this reference, in the course of our reflections in this work — the day that closes the six thousand years of the world, and opens the seventh or millennial Sabbath; the day that terminates the toils, and ends the weeping, and begins the undiluted joys, of believers; the day when the heavens and the earth shall pass away with a great noise, and the things that are therein shall be burned up; the day that cometh as a thief in the night, when new heavens and a new earth shall appear, wherein dwelleth righteousness; the day when all old things shall have passed away, and all things shall have become new; the day when, as the lightning bursting from the east to the west, shall the coming of the Son of man be; when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken;" the day of which we are told, "Be ready; for at such a day as ye think not the Son of man cometh." "They are ready at that day who love his appearing at that day."

This life clearly gives its tone to the next. The future was

so welcome and beautiful to Paul, because in the past he had been kept so faithful. "What a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "So run," says the apostle, "that ye may obtain."

Are we running this race, engaged in this conflict, our minds made up to be on the Lord's side? Seconds may be the hinges of millennia. The decision that is come to to-day may be the fact on which your destiny forever shall be determined. No man can over-estimate or exaggerate the tremendous importance of the hesitation in any one's bosom, "Shall I decide, or shall I not?" No arithmetic can count the consequence of that decision, "yea, or nay."

The Christian, as a Christian, expresses no regret at the past. All his sufferings for Christ's sake he forgets; all his wrongs from brethren he forgives; he bewails nothing; he sings and celebrates only victory. "I have fought a grand fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

A Christian need express no fear, no reluctance or aversion to die. I do not say that he can like death. I do not think that any human being can court it for its own sake. It is the most unnatural thing in the world. Our modern philosophers speak of death as if it were the debt of nature. It is not the debt of nature at all; it is the debt that sin has incurred, and that poor nature is forced so far to pay. But death is a most unnatural, because an abnormal thing; and to love to die is what we cannot do. But we can do this: we will brave the conflict for the sake of the crown; we will go into the valley of the shadow of death for the sake of that shining strand that lies beyond it. For what is the hour of death? It is the gratification of the deepest yearnings of the Christian heart; the suspension of the Babel sounds of this world, and the commencement of the harmonies of the blessed; not extinction, but exchange; not annihilation, but translation; the soul not dying, but laying aside its trammels, that it may truly, and nobly, and gloriously live.

Death is not an accident. Paul saw his death was irreversibly fixed. Probably by divine light he saw it; probably from circumstances he anticipated it. It is so in our case. Whilst I admit the full responsibility and untrammelled agency of man, yet I believe that the day and the hour of the death of each of us is as settled as the judgment day, by a knowledge that cannot err, by a love on which we may thoroughly depend. All this, however, does not take away human responsibility, or human guilt, when man rises, as he sometimes does, against himself. Suicide is not God's doing; it is man's. Some one once wrote to ask me what I thought of suicide. I have always thought one thing, — that so terrible an inversion of nature's laws rarely takes place except where reason has lost its footing, or insanity has upset its throne. Responsibility is not then; but it was in what preceded it. The guilt was in what preceded, the misfortune in what has followed. But the time of our death is fixed; and when a believer dies, and gives up his soul, as the flower bows its head and fades, it is not the exaction of a tyrant into whose cruel hands he is falling, but it is the response to his Father, who says, "Come up hither, come up hither."

In the euthanasia of Paul is implied his immortality. Paul (and this is worth noticing), in common with all the apostles, does not constantly assert that the soul is immortal. They invariably assumed it as the indisputable fact. Every expression that they use implies that the soul is immortal. Give up this, and the New Testament is unmeaning. Christianity is like an arch; you cannot take out a stone without the whole arch falling. Take away the immortality of the soul, and the Gospel is an inexplicable mystery. Take away the deity of Christ, and the whole idea of atonement is absurd, and the whole language of the apostles is that of fools or fanatics. The immortality of the soul is scarcely ever set forth as a dogma which the apostle proceeds to demonstrate; it is never

made the conclusion of a problem, the result of a syllogism ; it is not what he doubts ; he assumes it ; it lies at the root of all. A recent traveller saw a fragment of an arch among the ruins of Jerusalem, and, by calculating on the principles of mathematical or architectural construction, he concluded and proved that the arch, if complete, must have spanned the gulf that was near the city, and have rested upon the other side. What we see of the soul is very much like the fragment of that arch. There is enough of it displayed to show that by that soul of ours the great gulf in which rolls the dreary sea of death is spanned ; and that its other limb, if I may so speak, finds no resting-place, until it touches the opposite shore, on which is the throne and the presence of the Most High. Happy is that soul that, in the consciousness of immortality, fights the good fight, keeps the faith, finishes its course, and feels its safety to be in this, that Jesus died and rose again !

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLESSED HOPE.

“Lo, He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favored sinners slain ;
Thousand thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of his train.
Hallelujah !
Jesus now shall ever reign.

“Answer thine own Bride and Spirit,
Hasten, Lord, the general doom —
Promised glory to inherit,
Take thy pining exiles home.
All creation
Travails, groans, and bids thee come.”

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” — TITUS 2 : 13, 14.

A CHRISTIAN indicates, in every clause of his creed, that there is nothing on the earth that can fully satisfy him : it is not his rest, — nothing in it can fill the wants of his great soul, or satisfy the appetencies of his regenerated heart. A Christian's desires stretch into the future ; present space is not wide enough for his heart ; present time is not long enough for his life ; eternity alone must be his lifetime, — infinitude alone can be his home. He looks for that blessed hope which all his and all other experience proves is not to be realized in time, or to be gathered by human hand from

any of the provinces of this present world. It is the attribute of the mere animal to live in the present; it is the characteristic of the intellectual being to live in the past, the present and the future, together; and it is eminently the happiness of the Christian to live his happiest life most in the future. A believer looks backward for the ground of his salvation, upward for the grant of his salvation, forward for the possession and the enjoyment of it. The past tells him a Saviour died that he might be enfranchised; the present shows him the Priest upon his throne, bestowing by his intercession what he purchased by his blood; and the future discloses the emergence of Christ, crowned as the king of kings, and the prince of the kings of the earth, making unspeakably happy those that love "that blessed hope," his "glorious appearing."

A believer's joys thus expected from the future are embodied in the promises. The doctrines a Christian believes are the objects of faith; the duties that a Christian discharges are the effects of love; the joys that a Christian desires are grasped and held fast by hope. Faith reveals to him the sacrifice on which he leans; love prompts him to obey the duties that follow from it and cluster around it; and hope carries him on untiring pinions to the full possession of those purchased and promised joys that are at God's right hand, and of those pleasures that are there for ever and ever. What joy a Christian has now is a gleam from the coming glory; what happiness is in a Christian's heart now is an earnest and a foretaste of the future happiness. Our property is not in possession; it is in reversion. We have the title-deeds now, we shall have the full admission to the perfect and inexhaustible inheritance when time and the things that are now shall be no more seen. Hence, in the hope that is here put before the believer, the glorious appearing of the Son of God is stated as not the least bright and blessed object.

This is the grand apocalypse of the future age, the glorious era for which the Christian patiently waits, and anxiously hopes, — a ray of which, already shot into his heart from the future, is now “Christ in him the hope of glory.”

It is an appearing, we are told, that will be “glorious.” It would occupy too much space were I to describe it. It is enough to say, “He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” “He will come in the glory of his Father.” “He shall sit on the throne of his glory.” And we are told by St. Matthew that he will come with all the unexpectedness of the lightning that strikes from the cloud without the least warning to precede it, and with all the splendor of the lightning, as its coruscations flash from the east, and illuminate with their beams the regions of the west. “He will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” The Christian looks for his “glorious appearing.”

This blessed hope is the glorious appearing of a person, not of a doctrine. The Christian’s faith rests, not upon a dogma, but upon a divine person. So his hope clasps in its bosom, not a dispensation, but a divine person. We do not rest upon justification by faith, but upon Christ, the justifier ; we do not look for the millennium or the dispensation of joy, but for Christ, the Sun whose beams, from his meridian throne, will constitute the splendor of millennial day. Throughout the whole Bible it is evident that the great tendency of every statement is to bring the soul, not into contact with a truth, however precious, but into contact with a person, God a Saviour. A Christian’s safety is in Christ, a Christian’s joys are from Christ, a Christian’s service is for Christ, a Christian’s happiness is with Christ. In the joys, the duties, and the hope of a believer, Christ is all in all, the centre, the circumference, the life, the light, the substance.

This person, for whom the Christian looks, who is the object of that blessed hope, is a Divine person. I have explained,

I think, in some preceding lecture, that the translation of the words of the thirteenth verse is not the exact rendering of the original. It ought to be literally and strictly translated thus: "Looking for that blessed hope, the glorious epiphany or appearing of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour." This is not a doubtful interpretation, nor a loose remark of a popular commentator; but it is the strict translation of the original words, as has been shown in one of the most masterly and able disquisitions upon what is called the Greek Article, by the learned and celebrated Bishop Middleton. In the judgment of all competent scholars, there is not a shadow of doubt that the rigid and strict translation of the passage proclaims what all Christianity implies, that Jesus, who was crucified for our sins, is very God, equal to the Father in power and glory, and in Deity. The Christian, then, looks for the glorious appearing of Him who is at once his elder brother, overflowing with sympathy for him now, and who is also at the same time his great and blessed Creator, Redeemer, and High Priest. A Christian's faith will rest upon none but Deity; his love will cling and cluster, in its highest manifestation, to none but Deity; and his hope, with its large and capacious bosom, can be filled and satiated with nothing short of the advent and the presence of God over all, blessed forevermore. To trust in the priest is to trust in a creature; to trust in the church is only to trust in a corporation of creatures. It is unworthy of man's great soul to lay the stress of his safety or the pressure of his hopes upon any created being, from the archangel that surrounds the throne down to the lowest of creatures; or on any in the height or in the depth, in time or in eternity, short of God. My soul is too grand a thing to be committed to any creature's keeping; it is too precious a trust for me to hang to any man's girdle. I will commit that soul, with infinite confidence, to the keeping of my Saviour; but none beneath him, and none beside him, shall

have it, either to justify, to sanctify, to save, or to make it happy.

The language employed in this beautiful passage, expressive of the hope of the Christian, is plainly levitical. In other words, it is the language that particularly applies to the office of the high priest, and that describes his sacerdotal functions, referred to our blessed Lord. The high priest first made the sacrifice without on the brazen altar, where it was complete. After he had finished it, he went into the holy place, not without blood, there to appear before God for the people, and to make intercession for all the sins of himself, and of the nation. Whilst the high priest was in the holy place, the golden bells that were on his robes made sweet sounds, that indicated to the waiting and expectant Israelites without that the priest was not struck dead, but was accepted on their behalf by the High and the Holy One; and so long as these sounds of the bells were heard by the listening crowd, so long they felt that the sacrifice made without was accepted, and the intercession offered within was heard, and that they might wait with hopeful hearts for the priest to come out of the holy place, lift up his hands, and pronounce a benediction upon all the homes and hearts of expectant Israel. Now, our great High Priest finished the perfect sacrifice when he was offered without the gate. Then and there he made a complete atonement for the sins of the people. He is now in the true holy place. The present moment with us is, therefore, that of the Israelites standing in the outer court, waiting for the appearance of the high priest. The promises in the Bible, like the golden bells, are the sweet sounds that signify to us that our High Priest lives, and that his intercession is heard for us. At present we are on the tiptoe of anxious expectancy, waiting for and looking for "that blessed hope," that "glorious appearing," when the High Priest who is within the veil shall come forth; and standing, not in mock-

ery in the western window of a cathedral built with hands, but upon the circumference of the universe, shall pronounce a benediction that shall go down to creation's heart, and go forth to creation's circumference, and arise to its loftiest heights; till the hard desert shall feel it and smile, and the bleak wilderness blossom even like the rose. Our position is thus looking, waiting for our great High Priest to come out of the true holy place, pronounce the blessing, consummate and complete our happiness, fulfil the promise, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.

One remark I must offer upon this illustrative reference before I leave it, and it is a very important one. A close study of the ancient high priest, who was the perfect type of Jesus Christ, would finish Popery and Puseyism together, in every candid mind. When the high priest had made the sacrifice upon the brazen altar without, and had gone into the holy place, which corresponds to the true holy place where our High Priest is now pleading, there was no propitiatory sacrifice of any sort going on without. Whilst that high priest was interceding within, all offering had ceased without, all sacrifice was then done with; there was but the hushed expectancy of his appearing, the waiting heart, the blessed hope of his coming forth again. No more offering took place at that time. If this be so, what becomes of the propitiatory sacrifice of the mass, now alleged to be going on? what becomes of altars, sacrificing priests, and all the dogmas and the superstitions of Rome? There must be no sacrifice going on without while the high priest is in the holy place; and, therefore, any man who pretends to offer sacrifices without, or who pronounces tears to be expiatory, or martyrs' blood to be atoning, or anything we can do, dare or suffer, to be expiatory now, omits, forgets, or renounces the very fundamental doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus. But more than this: when the high priest went into the holy place, he went,

it is emphatically repeated, because it is important, *alone*. In other words, the only intercessor that God suffered to come into the holy place was the party that had made the perfect atonement on the brazen altar without in the holy place; and when the high priest went in, not a priest, nor Levite, nor prince, nor monarch, might dare to go with him, at the peril of their instant destruction. What does that teach us? Our High Priest is now within the veil, in the true holy place, corresponding with the ancient high priest, interceding; and in this act he is *alone* in the holy place made without hands. If so, what becomes of the alleged intercession of blessed Mary, St. Joseph and St. Peter, and other supposed coadjutors? There is neither room nor Scripture for them. Christ alone is interceding for us, and he needs no assistant; for he is able, without companion and without comparison, at this very moment, and willing to save to the uttermost, for he alone ever liveth to make intercession for us. This one doctrine of the office of the high priest disposes of the pretended daily sacrifice of the mass, which is the very foundation of Romanism; and of the so-called intercession of saints, which is one of the most popular and favorite but most idolatrous and unchristian practices of the Papacy. These dogmas are incompatible with the very genius of Christianity. What, then, is our duty? Not to sacrifice—this is done; not to intercede within the veil—Christ does this: we are simply to wait, the sentinel at his post, the servant at his duty, the tradesman in his shop, the merchant in his warehouse, the queen upon her throne, and the hearts of us all, where Christ is, looking for that “blessed hope,” ever cherishing that anxious, ardent, waiting expectancy of “the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour.”

This hope is very properly—a word I ought not, perhaps, to use, for all that an apostle says is proper—is very consistently characterized by the epithet “blessed;” because,

when realized, heaven and earth shall have passed away, and a new heavens and a new earth shall have superseded them, wherein dwelleth righteousness. A "blessed hope" is this, because, when it is reached, not I alone, the single believer, shall be happy, but all that have fallen asleep in Jesus. It is thus a Christian is not satisfied to anticipate his death as the great era of his happiness. There is something, if I may be pardoned for what seems a rash expression, almost selfish in expecting our only happiness at death, as if one wished to have a monopoly of heaven. But when a Christian is waiting for this blessed hope, the coming of Christ, he waits for the happiness of all the glorious company of those who constitute the bride; for that blessed era which shall not be happiness to us as individuals only, but to all the redeemed in the past, the present and the future, made together unspeakably and gloriously happy. To look for our individual happiness alone seems somewhat selfish; but to anticipate that happiness which is not the happiness of one, but of all, has something in it self-denying, catholic, beautiful. But, whether it be the one or the other, the hope constantly shining forth in the New Testament, that gleams in the horizon like a brightening and a nearing star, is not the happiness of an individual after death, but the happiness into which we shall enter when the bride shall meet the Bridegroom, complete in character and number, and the world close, as it began, with Eden.

The expression used as thus characteristic of the believer's attitude, and which we have likened to the waiting of the Israelites without for the appearing of the high priest, "looking for that blessed hope," is expressive of earnest and anxious desire for the return of Jesus, as of a transcendent blessing. The Sun of Righteousness now shines horizontally; his rays are almost level, comparatively cold, at least not so brilliant; but when he comes again, his rays will be vertical; he will ascend to his meridian throne, and bathe the wide

world in his unclouded splendor. We look for his advent as for the era of our perfect joy.

But where and through what media do we look for it? In the Bible. We must treasure up the promises, study the types that cast light upon the Saviour's coming, become acquainted with the nature of his advent; and thus we shall escape the fanaticism into which some interpreters have plunged, on the one hand, and avoid the indifference to that glorious and blessed hope which even some true and spiritually-minded Christians are not strangers to, upon the other.

We are also to look for it in the page of prophecy. We must not say we ought not to study prophecy. To say so is Popery. The charter of Protestantism is the whole Bible; not the Bible without the Apocalypse, but with it: and he who subtracts from the Bible one book of it may call himself a Protestant, but he has, in fact, surrendered the keystone of Protestantism. "Blessed," says the apostle, "is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." And why? Because then they shall read and understand the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the Son of God. We have no right to say, We will read this book of the Bible, and will try to escape reading that; it is sinful to say that a single sentence that God has inspired is not meant for us to study. Do not dogmatize where God has not determined; do not calculate dates where God has only given you a dim indication of the nearness of the time; but, while you see enough in the study of prophecy to cheer and encourage, you shall yet see more to make you humble, wait, pray, and long for his glorious appearing.

Let us look for this blessed hope in the promises. What are the promises? They are the sweet sounds of the golden bells on the high priest's robe, while he is in the true holy

place, telling us that he is accepted for us, and now interceding for us, and that by and by he will come out to bless us.

We must study "the blessed hope of his appearing" in the signs of the times in which we live. How often do we feel that, as time grows shorter in human life, it runs away more rapidly! and so, as time grows shorter in the world's life, it will run with greater speed. Who does not know that when one has passed through thirty or forty years, each year becomes shorter? At fifty the year equals eight months, at sixty it equals six, at seventy it begins to equal three, and the indications of this we constantly give when we exclaim, "Christmas has come! Who would have thought it? This is the close of another year!" What is done in the microscopic scale of individual life is going on in the larger rush of the world's life. Things are now accomplished in a day that demanded a year before; and results are now struck out in a year that exhausted centuries before; and these things show us that the time is short, that the Lord is at hand. Blessed is that servant whom when he comes he shall find looking, waiting!

Some of these signs are patent upon the very face of the Scriptures. One of the signs is predicted in St. Paul's epistle to Timothy: "In the last days some shall depart." The word "some" is often used in the Scriptures for a great number. "Some shall apostatize from the faith." Thus one great sign of this appearing will be, frequent apostasy from the faith. Who would have thought, except a believer in this prophecy, that ministers in London, once eminent for their piety and faithfulness, should in so great numbers pass into prostrate devotees in the Church of Rome? Who would have thought that nobles, wearing some of them the oldest coronets of England, should now be kissing the foot of him who sits in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God? — that the heirs of great houses should be seen putting

on the relic-chains of pseudo-saints, as symbols of their obedience and faith, and plunging into the very depths of the mummery and superstition of a dying and a degraded idolatry? Who can fail to see in all this the fulfilment of the words, "In the last times there shall be apostasy from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, doctrines about *δαίμονες*, *daimons*," that is, intercessors or canonized men, and other dogmas of the apostasy?

Another evidence of the closing years of the age is, that the love of many shall wax cold. There is plenty of enthusiastic feeling at a crisis, but it is only for a time. How many are there whose love has waxed cold! how many who have adopted German rationalism, or its earlier form, Socinianism! how many have fallen away from the purity and the promise of their first profession! how many are there whose sun, that rose in beauty, has set in shades and in night! "In the last days" many shall depart from the faith, and the love of many shall wax cold.

Another sign of the times is the returning life to the Jewish church. One of the strong signs of the close of this dispensation is the resurrection of the Jewish church. The shaking of the dry bones of that vision in the valley of Eze-kiel was a vision of the resurrection, the national resurrection and restoration of the Jewish people.

Tholuck, the celebrated German divine, says, that more Jews have been added to the Christian church during the last fifty years than during the seventeen hundred years that preceded them; and many who are acquainted with that remarkable people say, that in many countries they are now excited, moved, stirred. There was first a stirring of the dry bones before they were clothed in flesh, and life put in them; and in all probability we may live to see them, like a majestic cloud of fire by night, marching back to Jerusalem, taking possession of that illustrious capital, and raising there,

or attempting to raise, the temple portrayed by Ezekiel. And there and then in Jerusalem shall appear the Saviour, and shine before his ancients gloriously; and in that capital these Jews shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn, every tribe apart, — indicating that it has found its locality; every family apart, — the evidence that they are readjusted. These and other analogous signs give token of the budding of the fig-tree.

Another token, indicating that this glorious appearing is at hand, is the waning and constant death-struggle of the Mahometan empire. The other autumn I thought its last moments were come. Almost every one of the daily papers stated that Turkey was trembling on the eve of entire extinction. It is truer now than it ever was, in the language of Chateaubriand, that “Turkey is dying for want of Turks.” The Crescent is waning, the Koran has lost its charm, and the Turks, who are great believers in fatalism, are convinced that the power is already on the wing that is to prostrate forever the Moslem empire. These are indications that the great river Euphrates is drying up, in order to make way for the return of the kings of the East.

Such are some of the signs of the age in which we live.

There is an important sign, stated by Daniel, in a chapter that I reserved for future study in my lectures upon that book, that “In the last days many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” If Daniel had been describing the grand characteristic of the present day, he could not have portrayed it more accurately. There is running to and fro to an extent and in numbers unparalleled in the past history of the world. “Running to and fro” is the very description of nations coming in national clusters, with a speed impossible before, from every capital of Asia, Africa, America, Europe, and again returning to their distant homes after a visit to this great metropolis. It seems as if Daniel

had seen sweep past him the facts of 1850 and 1851. "And knowledge shall be increased." The man who does not study science this very year shall find that, when he quotes old facts, asserts old solutions of old phenomena, he will be found behind the age, and that the march of science is two, three, four, five years beyond him. So rapid are the discoveries of the age, that I heard a practical man — a man who judged of things merely in the light of making money — say, that it was of no use taking out a patent now, for the patent that is discovered to-day, and would have been a fortune some years back, will be superseded to-morrow. So true is it that "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

And all this is the spirit of the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord, the handmaids getting ready to welcome the Bridegroom when he comes to the bride, the hills being levelled, the valleys being exalted, the voice being lifted up like a trumpet, and sounding from the deep glens to the mountain-tops, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh: go ye forth to meet him."

Another sign is, God's people praying for his coming. Creation, groaning with the travail of six thousand years, cries, "Come, Lord Jesus!" Poor oppressed humanity cries! and who does not know that in this great commercial city of ours there is oppression in shops, in workhouses, in warehouses, disgraceful to us as men, incompatible with our principles as Christians? that there are those who, oppressed and groaning, like the Israelites of old in Egypt, with burdens that they cannot bear, cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, thou great deliverer!" But above all, Christians, weary with a law in their members that wars against the better law of their souls; saints, who are worn out with the afflictions, the trials, the losses, the crosses, the disappointments of life, — sick at seeing flowers they thought would bloom beneath them cut down,

friends they thought would accompany them to the house of God going in an opposite and in a disastrous direction; they, too, cry in their very hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus!" and he will come. Let us pray that he will hasten his coming; and in an hour when the whole creation shall be still, a great sound, as the voice of a mighty trumpet, shall ring through the graves of the dead, through the homes of the living, through palaces and halls and hovels; and all flesh, startled by that dread sound, shall rise, and some gaze with renovated countenances, and with bounding hearts, and say, "This is our Lord;" and others, who would not have him "to reign over them," will cry to the mountains, "Fall upon us," and to the hills, "Cover us, and conceal us from" — the most awful expression in the word of God — "the wrath of the Lamb." May we be among those who have the blessed hope of his glorious appearing!

This is pronounced to be a "blessed" hope, because it rests on a blessed foundation, and has a blessed consummation. Let us never forget that the hope of Christ's coming in his glory is never in Scripture detached from faith in Christ having come in his shame, his sorrow, and his sacrifice. It is a poor, paltry, empty hope, that does not grow from the cross of Christ; and that minister who is so millennialian that he preaches always Christ's crown, but omits to preach Christ's cross, gives a profile view of Christ, not a complete view. We may not hide the cross, even by the crown of Jesus. We may not make the hope of his second coming for one moment a reason for subordinating, or superseding, or depressing this great and blessed truth, that he that knew no sin was made upon that cross sin for me, that I, who have done, and thought, and said nothing but sin, might be made righteousness through and by him. And, therefore, the apostle says, "Looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour." Here is

the crown, the coming glory; yet the sacred writer makes that coming glory only cast more vivid light upon the past shame and suffering; and, therefore, he adds, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Fanatics may expect an elysium; mere worldlings, sensual worldlings, may look for a heaven that is only material happiness; but they that look in the right spirit and the right light for the blessed coming of our blessed Lord take their stand upon the cross, firm, sure, before they venture to lift one single eyelid, and to catch one ray from the emerging and the glorious crown. Let us make sure that our foothold is the rock of ages, and then we cannot look too intently, or rejoice too much in the blessed hope of "the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour;" "who," says the apostle, in words all of which I cannot here unfold, "gave himself." What an expression! "Gave himself." Let us weigh the words. I fear that one cause of the truth not making an impression upon us is, that we let it slip through our minds without retaining its impressions, or that we recollect it without trying to exhaust and understand it. The very food that is most admirable nutriment becomes poison when the proper organs do not digest it. So, God's truth, which is most precious when, in the words of a collect of the Church of England, it is "read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested," is turned into poison when it is laid up as lumber in the memory, or bright light in the understanding, but not digested in the heart, and incorporated into man's spiritual, social and moral being. "Who," it is said, "gave himself for us." Not his time, not his servants, not angels, not his exertions, not his influence; but "gave himself," soul, body, spirit, in order to be consumed a sacrifice in the flames of that love out of which and from which he "gave himself."

And to what did he give himself? He gave himself to shame for us: "Though in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." He gave himself to poverty: "Though rich, for our sakes he became poor." He gave himself to sorrow, and the bitterness of a broken heart. He was "a man of sorrows," — steeped in sorrow. He gave himself to contact with a world, a polluted, corrupted, sinful world. Contact with it was pain. He gave himself to conflict with evil spirits. Satan was let loose upon him, and tempted him; the law descended on his soul with blackness, darkness and tempest, and the voice of words; until, under the pressure of that terrible avalanche, a broken law, an offended God, a scoffing world, he cried, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani." This blessed sacrifice must be our trust, this precious atonement must be the foundation of our hope. If we let go this, our expectancy of his glorious appearing is vain. Let us hold this fast; not add to it, or do something, or pay something, or give something, but lean on it as the channel through which God's love can come to us, — the medium through which our prayers can rise to God, and so we may anticipate his glorious coming.

Thus we rest on a past but ever-availing sacrifice; thus we anticipate a future but ever-nearing and brightening glory. Thus faith leans, — thus hope looks, — the Christian is thus safe and happy, ever trusting, hoping, waiting.

CHAPTER XV.

WITH CHRIST IN GLORY.

“ The air is full of farewells to the dying,
And mournings for the dead ;
The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,
Will not be comforted.

“ Let us be patient. These severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise ;
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.

“ We see but dimly through the mists and vapors,
Amid these earthly damps ;
What seem to us but sad funereal tapers
May be heaven’s distant lamps.

“ There is no death. What seems so is transition ;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portal we call death.”

“ Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am : that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me ; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” — JOHN 17 : 24.

THESE last words contain a mysterious prayer. Its language is positively sinful if it be that of mere man ; it is mysterious if it be the language of a God ; it is precious and explicable, however, as a specimen of the intercession of our great High Priest.

What believer in the Old Testament records ever addressed God in language so peculiar, — “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am”? If I refer to the great father of the faithful, who might be supposed to have been permitted to use language closer and more confiding than any other believer, namely, Abraham, I find his words to be very different: — “I have taken upon me to speak to God, who am but dust and ashes.” Such was the language of Abraham, the father of the faithful. When David drew near to God, his language was equally humble: “After thy loving-kindness, O Lord, have mercy upon me. According to the multitude of thy compassions, blot out mine iniquities.” But this voice rises clear, articulate, unmistakable, above those of patriarchs, prophets, psalmists, evangelists, apostles, and embosoms in its utterance more of the majesty of sovereign demand than the humility of a waiting petitioner, — “Father, I will.” This is not the prayer of one that seeks from grace, but of one that deserves of merit, who plainly has power with God, and demands what he deserves.

Can this petitioner be mere man — a creature the most exalted of creatures? Dare an angel say so? Dare an archangel thus pray? They veil their faces in the presence of God, and prostrate themselves before his footstool, and cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!” But this voice they dare not utter, this petition they dare not breathe. He alone, who is at once the equal of God and the representative of man, may and does say, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

Whilst, then, this petition indicates and proves that Christ is God, it yet shows that he is perfectly distinct from God. I cannot see any solution of Christ’s biography that shall present it as a consistent whole, except the conclusion of all

sound and truly enlightened minds, that whilst he is God, equal with the Father, he is also man, equal with us. Grant this great proposition, and the whole biography of Jesus recorded in the four gospels is luminous, consistent, beautiful, and the reason of it, and the preciousness of it, become transparent to all. But deny this one thing, and assert that Christ is only man, and I must come to the logical and just conclusion, that he was not a true man; that he did not act as became a dependent creature; that the Jews concluded right when they said, "This man blasphemeth." But this we cannot admit. We know in whom we believe; whilst he might bow the knee, and become the mouthpiece and the representative of his own, and teach them to pray what he uttered for them, "Our Father," he could also rise to a higher platform, and, not bowing the knee, but standing at the Father's right hand, use the majestic language, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

Then, regarding it in this light, we learn that the will of Christ and the will of the Father are the same; there is no collision, no possibility of contradiction, or of contrast. "I and the Father are one," is the definition of the common nature of Deity. "Father, I will," is the exponent and the utterance of what is God's own mind. What Christ, therefore, said, is just the echo of what God truly does, thinks, knows; and what Christ has done is just the embodiment of what God feels towards us; so that, when I ascertain Christ's will, I ascertain the Father's will, for he and the Father are in all respects one. Then, I am sure that it never can possibly happen that any one given to Christ shall not be eternally with Christ, and forever behold his glory. It is the express will of Christ, which is the open utterance of the hidden will of the Father, that all who are given to him in the everlasting love of God, before the foundation of the world,

shall not one of them perish, but that all shall come to eternal joy, and behold Christ's glory, and be with him where he is forever.

Those believers who are thus to behold Christ's glory, and for whom he prays in this remarkable language, are described as "they whom thou hast given me." The objects of the Father's love are given to Christ, to be the subjects of Christ's atoning virtue and mediatorial care. Believers are given to Christ as the Father's most precious gift; and they have been accepted by Christ as the Son's most resplendent jewels, which he will spare and keep for the reflection of his likeness throughout all eternity. It is, then, we see, a very interesting and a very important inquiry, Have we been given to Christ? Has God committed us to him, to be clothed with his righteousness, to be washed in his blood, to be made like him, to be fitted by him for a place in that living temple, whose component materials are living stones, and which will be built up and perfected and completed in glory? How can we ascertain this? Can we penetrate God's secret book, and read our names there? No. May we expect that any one will descend from the skies, and tell us, "I was a witness of the gift of thee to Christ?" No. Then how shall we ascertain that we are Christ's dowry? Just by the same process that we ascertain whether we are Christians or not. Do we believe on him? Do we accept him as our only salvation, and our only desire? Have we committed our sins to him to be forgiven, our souls to him to be justified, our whole interests to him in the prospect of a judgment day to be borne, to be represented, to be upheld, by him? As sure as we have committed ourselves to Christ, so sure God has committed us to him. The commission of our souls upon our part to him is the repercussion on earth of the committal of our souls by God to him. The certain evidence that God loves us is that we love him; that God has chosen us in Christ, is that we

have chosen Christ to be our Saviour. So that we are to begin to ascend from what we are to what we shall be hereafter, not to try to descend from what is hidden in eternity to what we are now.

The ground of this prayer is next presented to us: "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." This is very remarkable language. If I had been left to express it, I would have said, "for thou lovedst them before the foundation of the world." "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory; for thou lovedst them." That seems the natural and the proper reason. But here it is otherwise: it is not "For thou lovedst them," but, "For thou lovedst me." It is perfectly true that God loved believers in Christ before the foundation of the world; but, strange yet glorious fact! the ground of our safety is, not merely God's love to us, but God's love to Christ, that thus our destruction might be impossible. But why and how should we be saved, because the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world? Just in the same way in which Jesus said that Saul, the persecutor, persecuted him when he persecuted his people: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Why persecute him? Because Christ and his people are one. God's love to Christ is the love to him as the head, and to all that are in him by the Father's donation, and are living and trusting in him. God's love to Christ, for all the practical issues of happiness and glory, is love to us also. And, therefore, we plead with God his love to Jesus; we plead in prayer the name of Jesus; we ask forgiveness through him in whom God is well pleased, and through whom, and because of whom, he is well pleased with us. So that he sees his own people in Christ; so really, so truly, so thoroughly identified, that all that Christ does, for

all practical purposes, we are seen as having done, and all that Christ has suffered we are regarded, for all practical purposes, as having suffered also ; so that in him, and through him, and for his sake, we are admitted into heaven, as righteous, without spot, and without blemish, the law having nothing to accuse us of, God's justice having nothing to condemn us for ; Christ clothed himself in our responsibilities, exhausted them, and will present us to himself a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. It was almost a reflection of this thought employed in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John, when Mary came to Jesus, and said, " Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick ; " not, " He who loved thee," which would look like pleading something good in the creature, but, " He whom thou lovest is sick ; " and, therefore, asking Christ to heal, because of Christ's own love to the sick. In the same way we plead God's mercy to us ; not on account of our love to him, for we are not worthy of it, nor even of his love to us, great, precious, sovereign as it is ; but on account of the Father's love to our representative, in whom we are justified, the second Adam, in whom we are planted, and through whom all that we lost by the fall is more than regained and replaced ; and we are justified and welcomed as righteous, for his righteousness' sake. Such, then, is the foundation of this petition, " I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me."

Let us look at the object of this prayer, not the prayer of a creature, but the intercession of the great High Priest. It is to comfort us by this thought that it is said, that Christ, who spake so beautifully, so truly, as never man spake, to our hearts upon earth, and who is said not only to speak for us, but to us, has now in the holy place, within the veil, our names, our cases, all before him, and ever liveth for this one specific purpose, to make intercession for us. The object of this prayer

is, first, that they — that is, believers, or Christians — may be with him. He does not pray that they may be taken out of the world, — “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world.” They have a work to fulfil, responsibilities to discharge; and, therefore, “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world; but this I do pray, that when their journey is finished, when the work thou hast given them to do is done, then they may be with me. I so loved them, that I came to be with them, and to die for them. I still so love them, that I pray that they may be with me, and reign in glory and in happiness forever.” It is as if the head did not feel complete without the body and the members added to it; and, therefore, “I pray that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.”

Thus we see, too, what is the main employment of heaven, beholding Christ's glory, — “That they may behold my glory.” In the future rest, whether it be on the spot we now tread on, regenerated, consecrated, reconstructed, or whether it be elsewhere, — for its locality is not the most important matter, — the grand occupation and study of the redeemed will be beholding the glory of Christ, — a glory immense, splendid, inexhaustible, — and to see that glory is to see revealed, disclosed in distinct apocalypse, what Christ is. May we know what this glory is? Not a doubt that Christ's glory is seen in creation. All things were made by Christ, and without him was not anything made that was made; and I have not the least doubt that, when sin is utterly removed, and when the effects of sin upon our sight, and hearing, and senses, are completely done away, we shall see, in the wing of a butterfly, a mysterious manifestation of creative power, goodness and wisdom, that we do not now see in the splendor of the starry sky on a winter's night, or in the glory of the earth when she puts on her summer robes; we shall see in the leaf of a plant, in the petal of a flower, in the most

minute creations, that bear the stamp and the signature of Jesus, a glory that will astonish us; for the more that we descend and dive into anything that God has made, the more wonderful is the revelation of beauty that we find. It is not so with human productions. If we examine the very choicest and most precious things that have come from the ends of the earth to be exposed at the great Exhibition of all nations, we shall find that the more we increase the microscopic power with which we look at them, the more imperfect will they appear. Take a piece of the most exquisite lace, submit it to the oxy-hydrogen microscope, and it will look clumsy as a fisherman's net; but, if we take the wing of an insect, and examine it side by side with the most delicate Valenciennes or Brussels lace, we shall see how great is the difference between the intricate beauty of what God has made and the choicest productions of the genius of man. Now, I do not see why we should not say and believe that, when we come to a future, and higher, and perfect state, all the things that God has made shall be seen in the splendor in which they were made, and appear to us bearing signatures of wisdom, benevolence, power and majesty, that will indicate one — it may be the lower — department of the glory of Christ.

But, let me add, this is but one part. The glory of Christ is not creative glory only, it is also providential glory. "The Lord reigneth;" and we shall see, I am satisfied, at that day, when we can take a retrospect, clear and without cloud, of all history, — and all history may be laid before us, and comprehended by us, — that it was one continuous, consistent way; that there was not a single blunder in the management of all things; that there was not one single incident in a Christian's biography that obstructed; but, on the contrary, that every incident contributed to his expansion, his progress, his fitness for heaven, his true and lasting happiness. We shall then see this text written and realized, in a way we

never saw it before, — “All things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.”

Thus sun, moon, stars, flowers, insects, earth, ocean, stream, lake, wind, wave, shall all be seen setting forth, as consecrated missionaries, the glory of Christ. Thus all facts, all chapters, all sections, all turns, all windings, all convulsions in history, shall visibly write out the glory of Christ's providence.

And last, but not least, the glory of Christ that we shall behold will be his glory as the Redeemer of his own beloved and ransomed people. We shall then see how precious was that blood which thousands now tread under foot, how glorious was that righteousness which we admire and have put on, the glories and the excellences of which we had formed but a most imperfect and miserable conception of. We shall then learn to sound the depth, and to soar to the height, and to grasp the breadth, of that love which now passeth understanding. We shall see that this Christian religion of ours, which some men scoff at, which other men reject, but which increasing numbers receive, instead of being foolishness, as the Jews call it, or a stumbling-block, as the Greek finds it, is the wisdom of God and the power of God. We shall then see that text as we never saw it, and we shall then understand it as we never understood it before, — the most wonderful text that was ever written, the most precious text in the whole Bible, — “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life.” We shall then see what is in that text, “Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us.” “For a good man some would even dare to die, but God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Then we shall sing as we never sung before, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings

and priests unto God and his Father, be glory and honor forever." We shall then see his glory as God, his glory as man, his glory as God-man, the one Mediator. I have no doubt that the Bible we now see and comprehend so imperfectly will then be found to have depths and beauties and glories in it which eye now hath not seen, and ear now hath not heard, and man's heart, in its present state, it has not entered into to conceive. We shall see Christ's glory in creation, in providence, in grace; the last, the greatest, the Rose of Sharon, more glorious than all roses, the Morning Star, brighter than all stars; Christ, the pearl of great price, more precious than the gems of the earth, or the pearls of the deep,—and the knowledge of him, the knowledge of all that is most beautiful, most glorious, in the universe of God.

What a sublime prospect, and what an interest will be attached to this state! There is much delight now in the pursuits of science. The excitement enjoyed by those whose pursuits are of a scientific nature, as they discover some new foot-print of God, some new evidence of his wisdom, power and goodness, is most intense. What shall it be, then, when successive years will be spent in ever-accumulating discoveries, each discovery bringing new glory to God, new delight to man, and this forever and forever, without ceasing and without suspension!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COMING OF ELIJAH.

The wave is breaking on the shore,
The echo fading from the chime ;
Again the shadow moveth o'er
The dial-plate of time.

O, seer-seen angel ! waiting now
With weary feet on sea and shore,
Impatient for the last dread vow —
That time shall be no more !

“ Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord ; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” — MALACHI 4 : 5, 6.

I TAKE a view of the two verses at the head of this chapter which I find contradicted in some of the leading commentaries of the day, and certainly not generally accepted by the great body of Christians. I will not pledge myself that my view is the only correct one ; but I will give the reasons that have led me to the conclusion, and these reasons the reader is to examine, and, on their strength or invalidity, either to agree or dissent, as conscience, directed by reason and the rest of Scripture, may dictate.

I do not believe that this passage directly or primarily refers to John the Baptist, and to the first advent of our Lord ; I have come to the conclusion that Elijah in person

is literally to precede the second advent of Christ, and that that second advent is the promise that is here recorded.

Before entering on this subject, and giving reasons whereby to judge whether I am right or wrong, I will inquire, first, What is that "great and dreadful day of the Lord"? The only way to ascertain this is to refer to the passages of Scripture where it is alluded to. It is described in 1 Thessalonians 5: 1—3: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord"—or, as it is called in my text, "the great and dreadful day of the Lord"—"so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety," that is, when the great bulk of mankind shall be saying, It is all nonsense: these great and awful predictions are not true—Peace, peace, we are sure to escape—"then"—this is what will make that day dreadful—"sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." We have the same day described in 2 Thessalonians 1: 7—10: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day,"—the day when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that obey not the Gospel of Christ. We have the very same day referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2: 1—3: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be

troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." It evidently was anticipated as a great and a dreadful day; for the apostle here writes to prevent them being disheartened, and depressed, and alarmed, as if that great and dreadful day were at hand: "for," he says, "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first," which I need not now refer to. We have the same day described in 2 Peter 3: 10—13: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

In the second chapter of the prophet Joel we have a prophecy, the first sprinklings of which came down from heaven on the day of Pentecost, as referred to in the Acts of the Apostles; but, from the strength of the words used by the prophet, it is evident that the day of Pentecost recorded in the Acts of the Apostles was but an earnest of what shall be,—an exhibition in brief of what will more fully take place in the future. In Joel 2: 28—31, it is stated, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into

darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come," — the very words that are employed in my text. Now, that has not been fulfilled. It cannot be alleged that any such scenes as these, of a universal or of a national description, have ever taken place in the past, or that this prophecy has been fulfilled, or that the day of Pentecost can be called in any sense a "great and terrible day of the Lord," with all these accompaniments of terror. It was a day when the Spirit came down, it is true, like flames of fire: but these were not consuming, but sanctifying, and disclosed a message of mercy, accepted by successive thousands day after day, who rejoiced and were made glad by it.

Thus, from all these passages I draw the inference, that the day, "the great and dreadful day of the Lord," is our Lord's second coming; for can it really be said by us, as honest readers of the word of God, that anything answering to these strong and vivid delineations was displayed when Jesus was born a babe in Bethlehem, and when the Magi came from afar to worship him? And if we take the context of the passage I have selected for consideration, we shall see this more clearly: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." That day was the close of this dispensation, the manifestation of the sons of God, when the great separation shall be made, and the final portion and destiny of all mankind shall be irreversibly determined. In Malachi 4: 1, it is written, "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it

shall leave them neither root nor branch." Now, surely, this has not been fulfilled. I will not disguise the fact that such commentators as Scott and Henry think so; but we must open God's word, and we must tell Scott and Henry, however excellent, to stand at the bottom of the hill, while we, like Moses, go up to the summit of the mountain, and try to see God face to face, and hear what he says; not the diluted echoes of my interpretation, or any other man's.

I have thus examined the day here described. We have seen how impossible it is to suppose all this to have taken place at the first manifestation of our Lord, — that is, all the wicked and the righteous separated; or, as here predicted, "Ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." It is the strongest figurative language, I admit; but if it has any meaning at all, it is, that evil shall be put down, and that the good, and the exponents of the good, shall be gloriously triumphant. Now, was this the case at our Lord's first advent? Was it not the fact that all that were converted by our Lord's personal ministry were a mere handful? that, so far from the righteous being supreme in Judea, they were a mere fragment in the midst of a mighty multitude that rejected the Gospel?

But after the day of Pentecost was it the fact that the righteous were supreme? They were persecuted. The Ten Persecutions broke out soon after the day of Pentecost; and, so far from Christianity being supreme, enthroned and absolute, in its merciful and beneficent sway, the Christians were clothed in wild-beasts' skins, and thrown into the amphitheatre to be devoured; they were cast into the flames, Nero making bonfires of their bodies in order to illuminate the darkness of a Roman midnight. I do not see how anything that is here described can be said to have been hitherto actually fulfilled.

But it is argued that John the Baptist is spoken of in the third chapter of this prophecy at the first verse ; and confessedly this is the case ; is not Elijah, therefore, the same person ? There is no doubt that this first verse, " Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me ; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in," does describe John the Baptist ; because the angel that announced him to Zacharias expressly said so ; and besides, there are other passages in the New Testament scriptures in which these words are expressly predicated of John the Baptist. It is perfectly plain, then, that they describe him. Hence, the argument of those who differ from me is, If John the Baptist is described in the first verse of the third chapter, is it not natural to think that he is also described here, in the last verses of the fourth chapter, since the language is to a great extent similar ? I answer, it does not follow ; because, in other passages of Scripture, where we have the description of Christ's sufferings, we have immediately afterwards the description of his glory. We have one text describing Christ's advent to suffer, and another, immediately afterwards, proclaiming his advent to reign ; the dawn melting into the perfect day ; the morning sky, depressed and cold in the one, lost in the splendors of the mid-day sun in the other, according to prophetic language, almost without a transition between. For instance, in Isaiah 11 : 1, 2 : " And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots ; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." Now, these first two verses are plainly the prediction of Christ's lowly birth, " a rod out of the stem of Jesse ;" or, as Isaiah calls it, in the fifty-third chapter, " a root out of a dry ground," an obscure, unpromising thing ; not royal, and not regarded.

Yet the prophet says, in the sixth verse of this same chapter, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." Here is a description of great glory following a description of great humiliation. But there is a still more remarkable instance in Isaiah 40, which is worth looking at: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Now, here is John the Baptist: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Then pass on to the ninth verse: "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a

shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." We have here again the intermingling of Christ's first advent and Christ's second advent; and therefore the inference that I draw is, that it is possible that the opening of one chapter may refer exclusively to his first advent to suffer, and that the close of the chapter may refer as exclusively to his second advent to reign. I might quote other passages to prove this. For instance, Zechariah, 9: 9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." That was literally fulfilled, and describes his humility. But in the next verse it is said: "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." And then the prophet breaks forth in a strain of great magnificence, descriptive of the last and future glory of the Son of God. It is thus that I get rid of the difficulty that, because John the Baptist is described in the one passage, he must therefore be referred to in the other.

But, that John the Baptist is not here spoken of, is plain to me from the effect of his voice. What is the result of the voice here predicted of Elijah in the great and dreadful day of the Lord? Not that he shall attempt to do anything, but that he shall succeed in doing something. "He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers;" and the consequence of this will be, that God will not "smite the earth with a curse." Now, did John the Baptist "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers"? Is this the record of his ministry? What does our Lord say of

it? He says, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." What does that mean? That John the Baptist's ministry was rejected, and that Christ's ministry was rejected. It is not true, then, that John the Baptist succeeded in turning "the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers."

In the second place, did John the Baptist's success in turning "the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers," avert the curse from Jerusalem? No; for in less than seventy years afterwards Jerusalem was overwhelmed; the whole land was smitten with the curse of God; the very foundations of the city were undermined by Titus and Vespasian, and scarcely a wreck of its departed magnificence remained for a Gentile to admire, or for a Jew to survey. And our blessed Lord pronounces judgment upon Jerusalem, comparing it with Tyre and Sidon, and asserting that, if so great works had been done in these as had been done in it, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes.

But now the most difficult part of the passage remains; that is, the reference made to this subject in the New Testament. If the New Testament assert that John the Baptist's ministry exhausts the text, then there is an end to my interpretation of it, or rather to what seems to me the just interpretation of it. But I submit that it does not do so; on the contrary, there is evidence in the New Testament, in reference to this passage, which goes to show that not John the Baptist but Elijah shall come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. The most remarkable reference to it is in the account of the Transfiguration, which occurs in Matthew 17: 1—13: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James,

and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias" (that is the Greek form of the word "Elijah"), "talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then," it is added, "the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

This is the passage that has led to the conviction, on the part of many minds, that the prophecy of Elijah contained in Malachi is exhausted in the character and work of John the Baptist. The former difficulties in accepting that interpretation I have already submitted to the reader. This transfiguration was clearly a forelight — a short, brief, and evanescent apocalypse — of that future glory in which Christ shall be all and in all; it is the book of the apocalypse in

brief, and it was given to the disciples to cheer their hearts in the prospect of that dire tragedy which was very soon to be consummated in their sight. Now, when the disciples, not sufficiently enlightened (for I need not remark that they were constantly indulging dreams that Jesus was come to overthrow the Romans, and to set up a temporal and a great sovereignty in the midst of Palestine), noticed Elijah, who, be it remembered, did not die, but was translated, on the mount, and saw Christ beside him in his glory, they said, "The scribes say that Elijah is to precede the glory of the Son of man; and if this be thy glory, and," as they expected, "if this be the commencement of thy great and lasting kingdom, why dost thou tell us, Lord, not to mention this to any man? It is the universal expectation of our countrymen that Elijah will come to precede thy glory. If we tell this to no man, then the scribes and Pharisees will say, Thou art not the predicted Messiah, for we know it is an absolute fact that Elijah will come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord." The disciples substantially said, "If we are to tell no man that we have seen the very thing that will satisfy every Jew that Jesus the Messiah is come in his glory, then they will say, Thou art not the Messiah; thou art not yet come; and we shall not succeed in convincing any one that this is thy kingdom, that thou art the Messiah, and that thy victorious reign has at length arrived."

It is also worthy of notice, that so completely were the apostles filled with this idea, that they said, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" that is, Is this the beginning of the long-expected monarchy? Is this the dawn of thy appearance in majesty, to subdue our enemies, to exalt thine ancient people, and to reign prosperously over all the earth? Now, what was our Lord's reply? He says, in very decided words, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." Surely, this at first strikes us as a contradiction,

if John the Baptist were the Elijah referred to ; for he does not say, "The prophets have said that Elijah shall first come, and restore all things ;" but he announces a clear prediction which relates to the future : "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." Then he adds, "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." Now, it would seem to me that, if John the Baptist were Elijah, and Elijah John the Baptist, there is a contradiction here : because our Lord gives a prophecy to his disciples, saying, "Your expectation that Elijah shall come is perfectly true, for he shall come ;" and then he adds, "Elijah has come already." Is there any interpretation of the last clause that will show that he does not refer to John the Baptist as the Elijah of the first clause ? Our Lord says, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things ;" but can it be said, with any propriety, that John the Baptist restored all things ? Did he restore anything ? Recollect what this was connected with. The question of the disciples was, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ?" that is, reconstitute the Jews a distinct and a glorious nation ? Our Lord says, "Elijah shall come and do what you anticipate—restore all things ; but John the Baptist has come, and, so far from restoring all things, they did to him whatsoever they listed ; that is, they killed him ; and they will do exactly the same to me, your Lord and Master ; they will also kill me."

There is another difficulty which makes the popular interpretation still more impossible ; and that is John's own statement in answer to a question relating to himself, contained in John 1 : 19—21 : "And this is the record of John,"—that is, John the Baptist,— "when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou ? And he confessed, and denied not ; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elias ? And he

aith, I am not." Well, then, here is John the Baptist's own express declaration that he was not Elijah; and therefore we must interpret our blessed Lord's words respecting John the Baptist in the light of John the Baptist's words, "I am not Elias." One of the most accomplished Hebrew scholars of the present day, Dr. M'Caul, has paraphrased the reply of our Lord to his disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the following manner: "The scribes, say the disciples, expect a glorious kingdom of Messiah, and before it they expect that Elijah the prophet will come." "They are perfectly right in their expectation. The forerunner of this first advent of the Messiah — of this humble advent — is John the Baptist. They have done to him whatsoever they listed. Likewise they shall do unto the Son of man."

Well, then, you ask, how are we to explain our Lord's reply, "Elias is come already"? I answer, it is explained by the angel, when he addresses Zacharias, Luke 1:15—17: "He (John the Baptist) shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Now, that very language indicates that he was not Elias, and that the prediction that Elias the prophet shall come was not fulfilled in John; but that John, as a forerunner of Jesus in his humility, was so by having "the spirit and power of Elias," and not by being Elijah or Elias himself.

We have thus, then, the evidence that Elijah was come, in this sense, that one was there in his spirit and in his power, bearing testimony to a suffering Messiah; but that the promise still remains untouched and unfulfilled, that before the great

and dreadful day which is not yet come, when Christ shall be revealed from heaven, taking vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel, Elijah the prophet shall come.

But, you say, why not put a spiritual meaning on it? Then I must apply a spiritual interpretation to the previous verse, "Remember ye the law of Moses," — that was a literal person, — "my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb," — that was a literal mount, — "for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." It is not here, "Some one in the spirit and power of Elijah;" but, "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, that I may not come and smite the earth with a curse," but baptize it into an everlasting blessing, and make all things new, and earth close, as earth began, with Eden itself. Then, I believe that John the Baptist simply came "in the spirit and power" of Elijah, but that he is not the fulfilment of the prophecy in the two last verses of the fourth chapter of Malachi.

Let us now see what Elijah is to do. "He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." Some have interpreted this to mean, that he shall turn the Jewish heart toward the Gentiles, — the Jews now hating the Gentiles; and that he shall turn the Gentile heart towards the Jews, — the Gentiles now proscribing, and where the Romish Church is positively persecuting, the outcast Jews. It is a singular fact, that the Gentile takes all the bright prophecies of God's word to himself, and leaves all the curses pronounced in it for the Jews. And then, not satisfied with appropriating so much to his credit, — all the good things to himself, and leaving all the bad things for the Jew, — he sets out making God's prophecies true by persecuting the Jew. Now, we have nothing to

do with fulfilling prophecy; for under all circumstances our duty remains, Love thy neighbor as thyself. It is thought that this passage refers to the time when this hostile feeling between Jew and Gentile — this reciprocal antipathy exhibited on both sides — will be done away; and Jew and Gentile, nationally distinct, shall be, spiritually and morally one in Christ, — brethren, fathers and children.

Or, it may refer to another view. Our Lord said that the effect of his preaching — not that his preaching was the cause of it, but that the effect of his preaching — would be “to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” That was the effect of the Gospel, and is so now, especially when applied to the Jew. The fact is most remarkable. Let a Jew, at the present day, leave his communion, and he is immediately persecuted by those he has left. If I wanted the strongest evidence of the divinity of our plain, Protestant, Bible Christianity, I would just appeal to this fact. Let a Protestant leave the Protestant church, and go into the Church of Rome, do we not speak of him with compassion and grief, and never with anger? For instance, when we have heard of such beautiful spirits as Archdeacon Manning, such gifted intellects as Dr. Newman, entering the Church of Rome, we deeply deplore the fact, but we have not said a word injurious to their moral character. But just let a Roman Catholic come over to the Protestant church, and the communion he has left will do all they can to injure his reputation. A very illustrious convert recently, in the highest rank of our nobility, has made that transition, — and how do the Roman Catholics speak of him? We know, too, that the priests who have come over are spoken of in the most vile terms. Let a Jew come over to us, and we receive him kindly; but the party he has left reproach and insult him.

Now, is there not in that fact the most triumphant evidence that the side that can be thus charitable, and generous, and benevolent, must have truth with it; and that parties who need to blacken others in order to vindicate themselves must have something essentially hollow, and corrupt, and defective, among themselves? If a poor Jew leave his own nation and join the Christian religion, what do we find? He is persecuted, — he is driven upon the streets to beg. I have often felt this myself, with others; and I have spoken to our excellent Jewish missionaries who labor in this city, and asked them, “How happens it that the numbers of Jews that you convert always come to beg?” They say, “True it is; we cannot deny it; but the answer is, that when a poor Jew becomes a Christian, the party that previously aided him — for, to the credit of the Jews, they show immense respect to their own body — instantly persecute and proscribe him; and you must not, therefore, say that our converts from the Jews turn out beggars from the wickedness of their heart, but from the proscriptive nature of that Rabbinism which is the modern form of Judaism, out of which they have come.” When Elijah shall come, “he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

But I think we shall find the prophecy most completely fulfilled in the prediction that was given by our Lord, or, rather, the interpretation of Malachi’s prophecy, “Elijah shall first come, and restore all things.” This restoration will be the great event when he comes. Now, recollect what the question was, “Lord, wilt thou at this time *restore* again the kingdom to Israel?” to which our Lord replies, “Elijah shall come, and *restore* all things;” that is, he will do what you are anticipating, but not now. There is first one who has come in “the spirit and power of Elijah” to suffer, and to herald a suffering Christ; but then there will come an

Elijah in his own power, to herald a reigning Christ; he will then come and restore all things. Now, what meaning are we to attach to "restore"? In all the Old Testament prophecies respecting the future, the word "restore" is constantly employed. For instance, in Isaiah 1:26, it is predicted, "I will restore thy judges as at the first." In another passage (Jeremiah 30:17) it is said, "I will restore health unto thee," speaking to the Jews as a nation. And again, Isaiah predicts that the Jews shall be restored to their own land, and that they shall come up as from the wilderness of old. And again, Ezekiel, in his twentieth chapter, states that the Jews shall be restored to their own land, and shall go forth as out of the land of Egypt. There is a constant parallelism drawn in the prophets between the first exodus of the Jews out of Egypt into their own land, and the exodus of the Jews when gathered from all the nations of the earth, and last of all restored to their own land. I do not now quote the passages to show their future restoration, for I have done so before; but it is, to my mind, just as plain as any one thing in the Old Testament Scriptures, that the Jews shall return to their own land. And I believe that the first event that will give the signal of their approach will be the prophet Elijah coming. This is the deduction I draw from this passage of Holy Writ. And the fact that the Jews' return to their own land, when Christ comes the second time, is parallel to their exodus from Egypt, leads me to think that the modern Antichrist, who is the type of the ancient Pharaoh, will resist their return. Who that has read the history of the Ghetto at Rome has not read of the persecution of the Jews by that terrible despotism? We rejoice to know that this tyranny is in its last moments; for I have no more fear of Romanism getting supremacy in this land than I have of Ali Pacha obtaining supremacy in it. Its attacks on us are only the last spasmodic efforts of a dying system; they are

not the successive and decisive blows of a system in its vigor and in its youth. When the Jews are stirred, and are about to be brought back to their own land, very likely Antichrist will endeavor to resist their return with all his might. And what took place in the type will probably be done by the antitype. When Moses did his miracles to let God's people go out of Egypt, we find that Pharaoh had his miracle-doers, who displayed their miracles, and tried to persuade the king that they could do miracles as good as God's miracles, and that, therefore, they were right. You have just a first sprinkling of this going on at Birmingham and elsewhere, where you find the old pretension of miracles revived in the Church of Rome. We used to be called calumniators when we adduced her miracles as "lying wonders:" she was ashamed of them once—she now glories in them. Dr. Newman says, "I believe in the liquefaction of St. Januarius' blood. I believe that Virgins have nodded, and that painted pictures of Madonnas have opened their eyes." He honestly avows his belief in these things; and, indeed, one can hardly see how he can avoid it, since in the breviary, which he must read every day, he finds these miracles stated; and, in fact, saints are enrolled in the calendar because they were proved to have done these very miracles; so that, were he to deny them, he would be denying the whole system. But you have in that the first sprinkling of what will be. And, as Elijah did true miracles on the earth, who will say that when he comes again he may not perform true miracles again? And as Pharaoh and his magicians did miracles, partly demoniacal, partly pretended, who can say that the Church of Rome, in throwing the last die, will not have recourse to the most desperate manifestations of power?

But yet, Elijah will succeed, and will restore all things. And, therefore, I believe that this prediction is, that Elijah personally will appear; at least, I cannot see how to escape

from this view. I am here simply an interpreter of God's word, and nothing more. And it appears to me that Elijah, when he comes, will come armed with credentials that cannot be mistaken, and with proofs of his identity which every Jew will recognize; and that, in some way we cannot explain, he will give the signal for the Jews to march homeward to their own land. They will be only too happy to have such a signal; and the Jews — unconverted, I believe — will follow the beckoning sign, march in converging currents to the land of their fathers, erect the temple spoken of by Ezekiel, and whilst they are in Palestine, to which they have been thus conducted and guided, there will be fulfilled that prophecy, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." That this takes place when the Jews are in Jerusalem is evident; for it is added, "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart" (Zechariah 12: 10—14); showing that when this spirit is poured out upon them in Jerusalem, they are divided into their several tribes, engaged in their own worship; and that in the midst of it they shall see him whom, having not seen, we love, but who will come again without sin unto salvation to them that look for him. Thus the Jews then shall just be led to Jesus in his glorious manifestation by Elijah, as the

Jews were led to Jesus in his humility by John the Baptist; and they shall look upon him whom their fathers pierced eighteen hundred and fifty or eighteen hundred and sixty years ago, and they shall mourn, every tribe apart; and then they shall recognize what a sin their fathers committed; and on spots where they cried "Crucify him!" they shall shout, in a glorious anthem, "Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!" and Gethsemane itself shall become green again; and Jordan's waters shall again break forth into new music; and Calvary shall be the scene of a greater apocalypse than it ever witnessed before; and that grand land, thus brought to recognize the Saviour, shall be in the midst of the nations of the earth like a pillar of fire by night, and a pillar of cloud by day, and, under God, be a greater means of awakening the nations of the earth to a sense of duty, privilege, responsibility, than anything that ever occurred before. To see that I am not drawing on my imagination in saying so, we have only to hear what the apostle said in his soberest moments (Romans 11: 12): "If the fall of the Jews be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" that is, their conversion. "For I speak to you Gentiles;" and he says, "If the casting away of the Jews be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving" — that is, the conversion — "of them be, but life from the dead?" Here, then, is the apostle saying that this conversion of the Jews is to be the grand last stroke that will lead to the conviction and to the salvation of the Gentiles. Now, I may state that, seeing it hinted that some of the ancient writers took this view of the interpretation of this prophecy, and especially Justin Martyr, one of the purest and best of the fathers, I referred to him. Well, Justin Martyr, who wrote in the beginning of the second century, holds a dialogue with Tripho, a very acute and talented Jew;

and this occurred about the year 130. The Jew says, "How can I believe, O Justin, that the Messiah has come? I do not yet see that Elijah the prophet has come." And then Justin replies, "It is said in the prophet Zechariah" — that is plainly a mistake; he quoted one prophet for another — "'I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' We understand, therefore, that Elijah the prophet is to come; but this relates to his second coming. And when Christ shall come again in great glory, and in his kingdom, before him will come Elijah the prophet." This is the way he replies to the Jew. And then, another writer, Augustine, the most evangelical of all the Christian fathers, and who lived in the fourth century, says, in his treatise upon John's Gospel, "What the Baptist was to the first advent of Christ, that Elijah the prophet will be to the second advent of Christ. As there were two arrivals of the Judge, one to suffer and one to reign, so there will be two distinct heralds to precede and go before him." So that my interpretation is not a new one.

Now, if this be so, what a glorious prospect opens before us! — what duties, responsibilities, privileges, belong to us! "Looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ." "Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." "Now, little children," says John, "abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." May he establish our hearts unblamable in holiness before God — children or fathers — at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

First of all, we gather from the great function of Elijah the prophet — "He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" — that all true reformation must begin in man's heart. This

great reformer, Elijah, comes, and how does he propose to act? Not to turn monarchies into republics, or republics into monarchies; not to interfere with the civil arrangements of the nations; but he acts in a far more speedy and effective manner: he turns "the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." In other words, the great change which is to alter society is first an inner, it is next an outer, work. Man's scheme is to make a new bed for the restless, fevered patient: if he has a monarchy, he will give him a republic; if he has a republic, he will give him a monarchy. But God's plan is to let the bed alone, but to cure the patient. Man's plan is to give man something that he has not; God's scheme is to make man something that he is not. I say, man's plan is to give man something that he has not; God's divine plan is to make man something that he is not. He begins at the fountain; purifies that, and all its streams are pure. He makes the tree good, and then all its fruit will be good too. All social, all political, all municipal, all national arrangements, will only be prosperous in so far as this vital element is in them. What is the reason that the nations of Europe have no peace? Just because they want truth. Go across the Atlantic, and you have a great and prosperous nation with a different political *régime* from us; and look at our own country, with a different political *régime* from them; but both are growing, and both with promise, and reserved yet for great purposes, because the Gospel has struck its roots so deep in the national habits of the people: so that they can live under any form of government, and flourish two of the greatest nations of the earth. This is the result of living religion; and, until that be in the nations' hearts, all mechanical adjustments and arrangements will be utterly ineffective.

Again, the language, turning the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,

seems to suggest very much a home reformation. Elijah will operate a personal regeneration in each heart, — I mean, he will be the instrument of doing so, the Spirit the author of it; but it seems as if a home change were also alluded to. And who does not know that, if you would make the great home, or country, prosperous, you must begin by making the little home, the family, right in its relationship to God? It is the homes of a country that are the feeding springs of that country's greatness; and whatever clouds or vitiates or disorganizes its little homes, will soon vitiate and disorganize the great home of the nation. And who is the grand missionary and ruler in that home? Unquestionably the mother; and to mothers I write, knowing what a mother's power and influence is. You may do more to make your country prosperous, and to make its prosperity permanent, than members of Parliament, prime ministers, and soldiers and sailors, all put together; the mother I refer to, particularly. A father teaches, but a mother beautifully and gently instils truth into her children. The mother's influence can penetrate like a delicate aromatic perfume, gaining admission into the heart where the coarse influence of the father would not be admitted at all. The father's influence is the rude violence of the shower; the mother's, the gentleness and the softness of the dew; but, like the dew, saturating also.

And, in the third place, if this great mission of Elijah refer to the Jewish people, as I think it does especially, not excluding the others, then we have a deep interest in the conversion of the Jew. Their restoration is to be to us life from the dead.

I believe that their conversion will take place in their own land, whither they will be led by Elijah the prophet on a large scale; and there they shall look upon him whom they have pierced; but still, one here, and another there, will come as a first-fruits. I see in the recent scenes that have

swept before us in this great city, — I see in what is taking place in the Romish church at this moment, — I see in the excitement in Parliament, and out of it, on the Jewish question, — I see in all these things fore-lights of the future — the first sprinkling of the coming shower — premonitory, Baptist-like tokens to mankind, that the day, so dreadful and terrible to some, so bright and beautiful to others, is near at hand. And the fact that at this moment, according to Tholuck, there are more Jews living in Jerusalem than there have been for seventeen hundred years preceding, all put together, is an evidence that the poor Jews are creeping over to that land where their hearts are; that they are clustering around Jerusalem by an instinct truer than logic, stronger than reason, — an instinct that knits them to God, and proves to us that he has cast them down, but not cast them off.

Let us learn one more lesson, that the true way to avert judgment from a land is to promote piety in that land, — to “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” The way to prevent God’s curse, and to secure God’s blessing on a land, is to spread real religion. And, therefore, that man who teaches the children of the poor, that congregation which supports schools for the Christian education of the poor, that country which aids and spreads such schools, is doing a great and a good thing to avert that curse which comes down upon a guilty people, and to perpetuate that blessing which is never withheld from a pious people.

